



The New REPUBLIC

JULY 15, 2009 • \$4.95

The Lost Lincoln

*And Why
We Need to
Find Him*

SEAN WILENTZ

UPRISING IN IRAN

AN INTELLECTUAL
HISTORY *of the*
GREEN REVOLUTION

ABBAS MILANI

On the ROAD
with MOUSAVI
HOOMAN MAJD

WHAT OUR SPIES
DON'T KNOW
ELI LAKE

THE OBAMA
RESPONSE
NADER MOUSAVIZADEH
LEON WIESELTIER

PRESIDENT OBAMA **SAID WE MUST **CHANGE** HEALTH CARE:**

"Make no mistake: The cost of our health care is a threat to our economy. It's a ticking time bomb for the federal budget. And it is unsustainable for the United States of America."

-Hyatt Regency Chicago
Chicago, Illinois
June 15, 2009

"Even within our own country, there are a lot of the places where we spend less on health care, but actually have higher quality than places where we spend more."

-Southwest High School
Green Bay, Wisconsin
June 11, 2009

"We are not going to rest until we've delivered the kind of health care reform that's going to bring down cost for families, and improve quality, affordability, accessibility for all Americans."

-The White House
Washington, DC
May 13, 2009

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Make the Ask

THIS MAGAZINE has made no secret of its high regard for Barack Obama. Which makes it all the more distressing for us to observe the approach that his administration is taking on gay rights. During the campaign, Obama said all the right things (well, almost all—like most national politicians, he wouldn't endorse same-sex marriage). He invoked the importance of winning "equality" and "dignity" and "respect" for gays and lesbians. Now he is president. And one of the perks of being president is that you get to *lead*. But, when it comes to gay issues, leading does not seem to interest this White House.

There was, during the first few months of the administration, an understandable reluctance among liberals to believe that gay rights were being systematically sidelined—and a genuine willingness to be patient on the issue. Yes, the prominence of Rick Warren at the inauguration was irksome. But Obama had to reach out to religious conservatives somehow, to show them that he intended to be the president of Red America, too. And, yes, Obama seemed to evince little initial interest in fulfilling either of his principal campaign pledges to the gay community: finally permitting gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military and repealing the noxious Defense of Marriage of Act signed by Bill Clinton back in 1996. But let's be realistic: He had two wars to fight, an economy to mend, and an environment to save. And no one expected gay rights to be his top priority. Give him time, the thinking went.

But then hints began to trickle out that this optimism might be misplaced. First, there were the comments of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who told Fox News in March that repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell "has really not progressed very far at this point in the administration"—then added, "The president and I feel like we've got a lot on our plates right now and let's push that one down the road a little bit." Two months later came the revelation that the Justice Department had submitted a rather energetic brief in federal court backing the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act—the very same act Obama had pledged to repeal. Assailed by liberals, the administration protested that it was merely standard practice for the government to submit briefs in defense of existing law. That

was true, as far as it went. But defending existing law, while the norm, is not a *requirement*; and administrations have declined to do so in the past over far less significant matters.

So last week, perhaps stung by growing outrage within the gay community, Obama signed a memorandum giving same-sex partners of federal employees some, but not all, of the benefits enjoyed by heterosexual spouses. (Notably missing: health care.) At the signing ceremony, Obama explained that he was prevented from going further by existing law. Then he pledged to try to get the law changed. This is all well and good. But if Obama thinks that these scraps can make up for the otherwise dismal record he is accumulating on gay issues, then he is quite mistaken.

In all of this, nothing is more infuriating than Obama's refusal to act on Don't Ask, Don't Tell. It is true that the issue

affects a relatively small number of gays and lesbians. But discrimination in our armed forces carries a potent symbolism: It tells an entire class of people that the country is not interested in their service. And it would be an easy problem to fix. As Nathaniel Frank argued at TNR Online last month, Obama may need Congress's approval to officially repeal Don't Ask, Don't Tell, but he has the legal authority to tell the Pentagon to stop enforcing the policy via executive order. He could do it tomorrow. As for the political risks: Obama should look at some polls. Unlike same-sex marriage, the question of whether gays should serve openly in the military is no longer a particularly controversial issue. According to Gallup, 69 percent of Americans believe gays should be able to serve openly. To put that number in perspective, it is 25 points higher than the percentage of Americans who endorse Obama's handling of health

care, 19 points higher than the percentage who currently support the war in Afghanistan, and 18 points higher than the percentage who approve of the administration's economic policies. Obama is not afraid to push health care reform, send more troops to Afghanistan, or stand by his stimulus program—nor should he be. But why, when it comes to the far less controversial cause of gays serving in the military, is he apparently willing to punt?

And so, the Pentagon continues to expel gay troops. The Defense of Marriage Act continues to wreak havoc on the lives of gay families. And we fail to perceive "equality" or "dignity" or "respect" in any of this. ♦

DON'T
ASK
DON'T
TELL

Thought Rationing

Republican health care spendaholics gone wild.

JONATHAN CHAIT

TWO WEEKS AGO, President Obama offered to cut several hundred billion more dollars out of the Medicare and Medicaid budget to help make room for health care reform. This sort of gesture ought to appeal to conservatives, right? Apparently not. The Heritage Foundation warned, "At a time when Medicare is dangerously close to bankruptcy, it is shortsighted to funnel funds into the creation of another government-run program instead of shoring up Medicare." A *National Review* editorial complained, "These cuts in Medicare and Medicaid payments are nothing more than reimbursement reductions with no empirical or economic basis to justify them."

No empirical basis to justify them? Since when do conservatives require an empirical basis to justify cutting social spending?

The health care debate has been presented as a conflict between spendthrift Democrats and skinflint Republicans. The reality is closer to the opposite. Conservatives may make up the strongest opponents of new government spending (to cover the uninsured), but they also make up the strongest opponents of cutting existing spending. Health care has become the new defense spending—a category of public outlay that the right has trained itself to defend in even the most wasteful iterations.

The U.S. health care system, as you probably realize, is a vast cesspool of waste. We spend nearly twice as much on health care as the average advanced country and have no better results to show for it. Alas, every dollar of what we call waste is what somebody in the industry calls "income." So anything that makes the system more efficient makes somebody unhappy, and that somebody has a team of lobbyists.

This may help explain why conservatives have embraced the rather unlikely cause of stopping cuts in Medicare payments to doctors and hospitals. It would also explain the conservative attachment to "Medicare Advantage"—the program created in 2003 that enrolls some Medicare prescription-drug recipients into private insurance rather than traditional Medicare. Medicare

TRB *From Washington*

Advantage costs \$922 more per recipient than traditional Medicare, which makes it a lucrative boondoggle for the insurance industry. Conservatives defend it on the grounds that it offers "better benefits and better value," as the Heritage Foundation puts it.

So the right defends having the government shell out more money in order to have (allegedly) better entitlement programs. Even the staunchest free marketers have started to sound like the AARP. The Cato Institute's Michael Cannon protested that Obama "ought not begin the [health care reform] effort by proposing to take something away from seniors, America's largest and most politically active voting block."

And then you have the conservative apoplexy over "comparative-effectiveness research," or CER. Right now, the federal government has little solid information to help figure out what treatments to fund under Medicare. That's one reason why Medicare winds up finding so many unnecessarily costly medical interventions like expensive copycat drugs—or even interventions that do no good at all. In the stimulus bill, Obama got \$1 billion to fund comparative-effectiveness research, which, as you may have deduced, helps compare the effectiveness of different medical interventions.

GOP Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell is co-sponsoring a bill to prohibit federal health care programs from using this research. Fellow Republican Jon Kyl, the bill's sponsor, demands that CER not be used "to deny coverage of an item or service under a federal health care program." The really silly thing here is that Medicare *already* has the ability to deny coverage for services it deems cost-ineffective. CER would merely arm the government with facts to make better-informed decisions.

But suppose the Republicans are

right. Suppose that, right now, Medicare must underwrite any medical intervention, even ones that cost ten times as much as equally effective alternatives, and CER would eliminate this free-spending practice. Let's even suppose that the research gets perverted by cold-hearted bureaucrats who decide to deny Grandma her federally funded hip replacement. Wouldn't you expect the Ted Kennedy bleeding-heart crowd, rather than the likes of Rush Limbaugh, to be raising the alarm against the heartless, tight-fisted government? Something curious is going on here.

Conservatives certainly have understandable ideological reasons to oppose the Obama health care reform as a whole. It's the particulars of their opposition that arouse curiosity. The right has presented its opposition to health care reform as principled disagreement with "big government." But opposing "big government" can mean different things. Does it mean opposition to regulation? To spending? To the direct funding of public services as opposed to via private sector middlemen? The Republican Party and its ideological allies have defined it increasingly as whatever suits the profitability of the health care industry.

It's not that every conservative apparatchik is walking around Washington toting a suitcase of Pharma cash and a conspiratorial grin. Intellectual corruption doesn't work that way. The health care industry has spent vast sums to influence politicians and opinion leaders, mostly on the right. Health care is an issue where precious few conservatives have paid any attention to the details of policy. And the industry is a natural ally of the conservative goal of preventing single-payer health care. So the industry has managed to define its self-interest as the conservative position on health care.

If health care costs continue to rise at current rates, by 2040, the share of

GDP consumed by Medicare and Medicaid will nearly quadruple. Meanwhile, conservatives have decided that the worst thing that could be done to these programs would be to "ration" them. When Medicare recently decided not to

fund one kind of colonoscopy, a *Wall Street Journal* editorial warned darkly that "the program's central planners decided last week to deny payment." Imagine—central planners limiting the benefits of a social program! Why, it's one step from socialism. ♦





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COVER: Abraham Lincoln, ambrotype photograph by Preston Butler, August 1860/The Art Archive/Culver Pictures

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Diagnosis: Inertia

Obama's sop to health care 'fraidy cats.'

IF YOU LIKE your health care plan, you will be able to keep your health care plan, period." The line comes from President Obama's recent address to the American Medical Association, but it could have come from virtually any public statement he's made about health care in the last two years. That is no accident. Polls show that Americans think their health care system has severe problems, enough to warrant a major change. But the same polls show that a large majority are happy with their current health care arrangements.

In other words, people want change, but, more often than not, they don't want change that will affect *them*. And, if you

don't think such skittishness can have powerful political repercussions, ask Hillary Clinton, Ira Magaziner, or anybody else involved with the last effort to reform health care, in 1993 and 1994. The Clinton health plan would have forced most non-elderly Americans to change health insurance. In the vast majority of cases, that change would have been for the better. But it didn't make a lick of difference. With a little nudge from Harry and Louise, Americans became convinced that they had more to lose from the Clinton plan than they had to gain. And they turned on it.

From day one, Obama and his advisers have been determined to avoid that mistake. But making sure people can keep their insurance turns out to be harder than it sounds. It's been an ongoing preoccupation for staff working

on reform, both in the administration and on Capitol Hill. And, while they've settled on some solutions, each one of them creates its own distinct problems. In this case, what makes reform more palatable politically also makes it worse as policy.

IT MIGHT SEEM LIKE letting you keep your insurance is a straightforward and, for that matter, a pretty good idea on the merits. Generally speaking, if you work for a medium- or large-sized company and can afford the health plan that your employer makes available, you are in decent shape, at least relative to other Americans. Yeah, you're forking over more and more money every year. And, if you happen to work at a company with a lot of older workers, you're probably paying more than employees at companies with younger workers. But things could certainly be worse.

How much worse? Well, you could be one of those people forced to purchase insurance as an individual customer or through a small business. If that's who you are, you're probably getting a worse deal, in good part because the overhead on the plans available to you is much higher than those offered by a large employer. (It costs an insurance company a lot more to deal with 500 individuals than it does to deal with one company that has 500 employees.) Chances are the benefits in your plan aren't so comprehensive; they may cover fewer services, stick you with higher cost-sharing, or some combination of the two. And, if you have diabetes, survived cancer, or even have nasal allergies, you might not be able to get coverage—at least not at rates you can afford—because of pre-existing conditions.

Worst of all, even if you have affordable coverage, it may not be that reliable. Some carriers that serve people like you have a certain fly-by-night quality to them. You're far more likely to discover one day that your health-insurance company has stopped offering coverage in

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

With **DREW FRIEDMAN**



For Silvio Berlusconi, foreign policy is always on the brain.

your community—or, in some cases, that it's not even a licensed insurer. Since you don't have a vast, experienced human-resources department negotiating rates and benefits on your behalf, you might discover that the policy you've bought doesn't actually pay for the medical services you need—quite possibly only after you've received those services and the hospital bill has arrived in your mailbox. Or you might file a large claim and learn that your carrier has canceled coverage retroactively, because, somewhere in your medical records, it found what it considers evidence of a pre-existing condition.

Insofar as today's reforms strive to reorganize the insurance market, it's primarily to benefit people like you. And the idea here is pretty straightforward: to create some kind of marketplace where you, as an individual or small-business employee, can choose from among quality insurance plans the same way that an employee of a large company can. The proposals working their way through Washington right now would call these marketplaces "exchanges." In Massachusetts, a state that created such a marketplace on its own, lawmakers called it the "connector." The basic idea is the same, though. Insurance sold through these marketplaces must include a defined set of benefits and be available to all people, at one price, notwithstanding pre-existing medical conditions. Tight regulations prevent carriers from using loopholes to withhold payment or cancel coverage. People who buy coverage through the marketplaces are also eligible for subsidies to defray premium costs, depending on their incomes.

But this is where things start to get messy. Really messy. If reform sets up a marketplace where literally anybody can get insurance, some people are going to start rethinking their coverage decisions. If constructed properly, the marketplace will offer more insurance choices than even larger employers do today. Coverage in the marketplace will probably be more reliable, too, since plans won't come and go as quickly as they do when employers are offering them. Subsidies within the marketplace will make its offerings attractive, maybe very attractive, to workers with lower incomes. And, if the marketplace includes a public insurance option, that too could attract interest—particularly if, as many experts believe, public insurance can offer the same benefits for less money.

Absent additional policy changes, people who now get employer coverage might decide to drop it and instead get insurance through the marketplace. And—again, if nothing else changes—employers might start making different decisions, as well. Think for a second why employers offer their workers coverage in the first place. One big reason is that the workers demand it. If workers aren't demanding it—or, at least, if they aren't demanding it as strenuously—employers might not be so eager or willing to provide it. Put it all together, and a substantial number of people might end up moving

from employer coverage into the marketplace, in some cases because employers aren't offering insurance anymore.

To be clear, many of these people will be changing insurance because it's something they've opted to do, on their own. That's perfectly consistent with what Obama, and other reformers, have said. And, by any reasonable standard, most of the people changing plans will be better off—a lot better off. But that doesn't mean it's what voters want to hear right now or that opponents of reform won't scream about all the people "losing" their coverage.

WITHIN THE administration and on Capitol Hill, the architects of reform understand this. And, so far, policymakers seem inclined to tilt reform in ways that will discourage massive shifts out of existing employer plans. One way of doing this, likely to emerge in the Senate's legislation, is to restrict access to the marketplace. Here's how it'd work: If you have access to coverage through your employer, and if you're making enough money that you don't need subsidies, then the marketplace would be off-limits to you. Wonks call this creating a "firewall."

The trouble with this solution is that, if your employer decides to offer some kind of coverage and you're too affluent to qualify for subsidies, you're obligated to buy it—even if you think you'd get a better deal through the marketplace. You might not be pleased about that if, say, your employer offers only one or two choices. You might be particularly incensed if you wanted a public insurance plan and there was one available in the exchange.

Another way to reduce the migration of people out of employer plans is to simply make the offerings in the marketplace less financially appealing.

After all, if moving into the marketplace won't save you money, you're less likely to switch. This can be done by reducing the subsidies available through the marketplace (something the Senate is already on the way to doing, mostly for the sake of keeping the price tag of reform low). But this change, too, has the consequence of making reform less appealing from a policy standpoint, since it means fewer people will be getting financial assistance to help pay their insurance bills—even though, arguably, many of them could really use the help.

For either approach to be truly effective, government must take another step: It must require that all employers either provide their workers with coverage or pay a financial penalty. The "employer mandate," as it's known, is probably the single most powerful safeguard against employers dropping their plans. And it's very much a part of the emerging congressional plans. But the mandate's effectiveness will depend, in part, on how steep the financial penalty is. And, as it is, employers and their lobbyists are protesting the requirement, claiming that it will impose an onerous burden, particularly on smaller businesses that don't provide coverage now.

IN AN IDEAL WORLD, the best approach would be to admit that promising everybody the opportunity to keep their coverage, as Obama has done, is just not that advisable. A better promise would be that government won't force anybody to drop *good* coverage—that the relatively modest number of people switching insurance will be making a change for the better. There are signs that the House legislation is at least moving in that direction, since it seems to have a more porous firewall—and an apparent commitment to high subsidies.

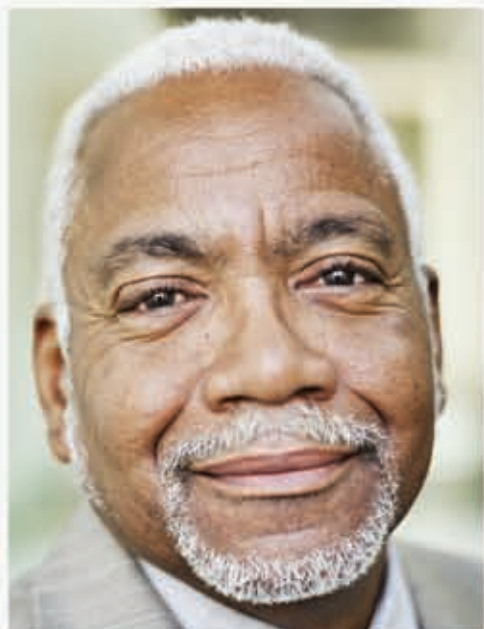
Such an argument would be paternalistic. Government would, in effect, be defining "good insurance." But Social Security has a similar rationale; the government is effectively defining an appropriate level of personal savings. Nevertheless, the program has somehow proven enormously popular and successful at achieving its primary goal of alleviating poverty among the elderly.

Embracing this argument would also mean telling some people with insurance that their world is going to change. But Obama—or any of his allies—can say honestly to those people that change is coming anyway. As proof, they can point to the aftermath of Clintoncare, when all those people


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who turned against the plan ended up enduring radical changes in insurance anyway. It happened because employers, buckling under the burden of employee-benefit costs, decided to make changes on their own. They moved everybody into managed-care plans—which, as it happens, is precisely the prospect that scared so many people about the Clinton reforms.

Today, health care costs are out of control once again. If reform fails, employers will be making changes—drastic changes—to the kind of coverage they offer employees. Some will dilute their benefits; some will stop offering them altogether. Obama himself made this point during his recent televised town hall, which suggests he understands what's really going on. The majority of Americans might prefer to leave their insurance as it is, but that's not really an option. The question is whether it transforms into something better—or something worse.

JONATHAN COHN

Uncommon Ground

Boston yuppies versus Mayor Mumbles.

IN MAY, *The Boston Globe* conducted a poll to find out what Bostonians think of their city's mayor, Tom Menino. Most of the questions were common to public-opinion surveys about elected officials: Do you approve or disapprove of the way he is doing his job? Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of him? But there was one question that seemed out of place, as if the *Globe's* pollsters had gotten their scripts mixed up and, rather than asking about a big-city mayor, were instead inquiring about a bucolic New England town selectman: "Have you, personally, ever met" Menino?

The question was presumably inspired by the fact that, in the 16 years he's served as Boston's mayor, Menino has yet to encounter a civic event he deems beneath his station to attend. Beauty-parlor openings, pancake breakfasts, Little League games—he shows up at all of them. ("If you're going to have your dog spayed, you call him, he'll be there," one Bostonian recently told the *Globe's* Scott Helman.) Still, in a major city of nearly 600,000 people, could a statistically significant portion of the populace actually have met their mayor? As it turns out, in Tom Menino's Boston, the answer is yes; according to the *Globe's* poll, a remarkable 57 percent of them, in fact.

"That's just me, Tom Menino—I'm out there listening to people, talking to peo-



Boston Mayor Tom Menino, a man some call "Mumbles," may be nearing the end of his unprecedented run.

ple," the mayor told me one recent afternoon, at once shrugging off and trying to explain his omnipresence. That morning, he'd been at a ribbon-cutting for a new playground. At lunchtime, he'd visited a senior-citizens center. Now, Menino was sequestered in his campaign headquarters, which was unusually bustling for a Menino campaign headquarters three months before voting day. In the past, Menino hasn't had to put much effort into getting reelected, running against either token or no opposition. Even his initial entry to the office was frictionless: As then-city council president in 1993, he inherited the mayor's job when Bill Clinton made Ray Flynn his Vatican ambassador.

But this year, as Menino seeks an unprecedented fifth term—a feat that eluded all of the men who served as Boston mayor before him, including political legends James Michael Curley and Kevin White—he is facing not only a crippling budget crisis, but two credible challengers, both city councilmen. (The mayoral candidates will compete in a preliminary election in September, with the top two finishers facing off in November.) As a result, the 66-year-old Menino is campaigning earlier and harder than ever before. Paul Maslin, a pollster whom Menino recently hired, says, "I think it's a given that it's going to be his toughest race to date."

Menino points to any number of accomplishments that have occurred on his

watch, from housing to health care. “I’ll put my record up against anybody’s record,” he told me. And the *Globe* poll in May did find that 73 percent of Bostonians approve of the job he’s done. But, in some ways, the upcoming election is less a referendum on Menino’s record than a battle over Boston’s self-image.

For a city whose residents like to think of their burg as “The Athens of America,” Menino can be a confounding figure—especially to those who reside on the ever-growing-in-number gown side of Boston’s long-standing town-and-gown divide. Unlike White, the ambitious liberal reformer with Williams and Harvard degrees who presided over Boston during the turbulent 1970s, Menino is a pro-saic urban mechanic who not only got his B.A. from the University of Massachusetts in Boston, but did so at the age of 45. Of course, Curley, who dominated Boston’s political scene for much of the first half of the twentieth century, had a similarly provincial outlook and pedigree; but what he lacked in ideological and educational distinction, he made up for in force of personality, ultimately becoming known across America as “The Rascal King.” Menino, by contrast, exudes a sort of anti-charisma—even in his dapper suits, he appears lumpy—and has been saddled with the nickname “Mumbles,” owing to his infamously poor locution (“dropping not just r’s, but also t’s, as if introducing an advanced strain of the Boston accent into the city,” as *Boston Magazine*’s Joe Keohane expertly described it).

The secret to Menino’s longevity in office has been his knack for just muddling through. Parochial even by parochial Boston standards—he grew up and still lives in the white ethnic working-class neighborhood of Hyde Park—he has never aspired to any office beyond his current one. He tends to avoid doing anything that might draw significant attention—be it positive or negative. Indeed, about the only thing Menino is renowned for, besides being mayor, are his malapropisms—once referring to the city’s shortage of parking spaces as “an Alcatraz around my neck” or promising to stop people from “conjugating” on Boston Common late at night. Now, as Menino seeks to make history in this history-obsessed city, the question confronting Bostonians is: Do they want this guy making it?

OF THE TWO city council members who are running for mayor, Michael Flaherty and Sam Yoon, it’s Yoon who appears to be the more formidable challenger. While the 40-year-old Flaherty has a sizable war chest and

deep roots in the vote-rich Irish enclave of South Boston, he often comes across as merely a less tongue-tied version of Menino. Indeed, Flaherty was once considered Menino’s chosen successor, until he evidently tired of waiting for his turn and challenged his mentor. But, if Flaherty represents a difference in degree from the current mayor, Yoon represents a difference in kind.

Born in South Korea and raised in Amish country in Pennsylvania, Yoon first came to Boston in 1993 to get his master’s degree at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. (He attended Princeton for undergrad.) After Harvard, he spent the next ten years as a community organizer in Boston before becoming the first Asian American in the city’s history to run for public office. His election to the city council in 2005 prompted *The Boston Globe Magazine* to name him one of its people of the year, declaring: “The best thing about Sam Yoon is not just that he makes us look good. He makes us feel good.”

Yoon is now hoping there are enough Bostonians looking for that sort of uplift to propel him to the mayor’s office. An earnest wonk who frequently feels the need to mention that he is 39—not to emphasize his youth but to reassure people he’s not still in college—Yoon is counting on minority voters and, more importantly, those who (like him) are newer arrivals to the city, lured by jobs in academia, medicine, and finance. In short, yuppies. “At a certain point, there will be more and more people here who have lived in the city for less than twenty years or less than ten years,” Yoon told me one recent evening, as he sat on the patio of an upscale pizzeria in the city’s hipper-than-thou South End neighborhood.

Yoon’s platform seems designed to stroke these voters’ erogenous zones: building educational partnerships between the city’s public schools and local universities like Harvard and MIT; creating a 311 number to call for non-emergency municipal services; replacing the city’s motor fleet with Zipcars; and, in general, looking to Seattle as a model for urban policy. “There is more to governing than just handshaking and ribbon-cutting and going to neighborhood barbeques,” he told me. Later that evening, Yoon said to a group of supporters who’d gathered over hummus and beers at a home in a gentrifying section of the Roxbury neighborhood, “Our city needs to make a fundamental, systemic change to bring our city gov-

ernment into the twenty-first century, because we are really stuck, we’re still operating like it’s 1945.”

History is not on Yoon’s side: The last time a Boston mayor lost his race for reelection was in 1949, when Curley went down to defeat after spending much of his previous term in prison. What’s more, Yoon begins the race in a money hole, with (as of the end of 2008) \$137,000, compared with Menino’s \$1.4 million. But there is one number that gives Yoon hope: 192,000. That’s the number of Bostonians who, spurred by the candidacies of Deval Patrick and Barack Obama, voted in the state and federal elections in 2006 and 2008 but didn’t vote in Boston’s two most recent municipal elections. And, when you consider that Menino was last elected in 2005 with just 64,000 votes, it’s not hard to see how a big increase in voter turnout could spell trouble for him. “I do this thing at events where I say, ‘How many of you voted in last year’s presidential election?’ Most of the hands go up,” Yoon explained. “Then I say, ‘Well, how many of you have paid little or no attention to the mayor’s races?’ It’s about the same number of hands that go up. I say, ‘Listen, you’re going to determine the next mayor of Boston, this election is going to be yours to decide.’”

Menino, meanwhile, maintains that he welcomes the competition. In the past, he’s been reluctant to engage his opponents, typically participating in only one debate, which he’s then scheduled for Sunday morning or the night of a Yankees–Red Sox game. But this year, he has agreed to three debates. Sitting in his campaign office, Menino was asked to respond to Yoon’s charge that he’s an “incrementalist.” “What does that mean?” the mayor replied. After the term was defined for him, Menino said, “I do what I think is right for Boston.” In his 16 years in office, Menino has rarely not known what Bostonians want from their mayor—including when they don’t want

much. He was confident that he still understood—and, in fact, embodied—the true character of what he called “my city.” “Now that people see I have two opponents, I’ve got more people coming to me and saying, ‘I want to help,’” he said, as he looked

out a window that afforded a view of City Hall. “I’ve been in the business a long time, I’ve never seen the reaction I’ve gotten this time, people coming forward saying, ‘Hey, we gotta help, we’re gonna keep you in office.’”

JASON ZENGERLE



The Third Obama

What does Valerie Jarrett do?

LAST SUMMER, Richard Holbrooke was in a pickle. Having advised Hillary Clinton on foreign policy for years, he had been hoping to ride her star back into government. Barack Obama capturing the nomination threw a slight kink in that plan. Despite having reestablished contact with some foreign-policy pals already amassed around the future president, the veteran diplomat had no relationship with, or clear entrée to, the candidate's inner circle. Then he had breakfast with Valerie Jarrett.

The two sat down late in the campaign at New York's St. Regis Hotel for a casual-yet-pregnant-with-possibilities chat arranged by Democratic fixer Vernon Jordan (who happens to be married to Jarrett's cousin, Ann). Holbrooke, who quips that his desire to join an Obama administration "was not exactly a secret," says that Jordan told him, "You *have* to get to know her." And then, he adds, Jordan "just called her and set it up." The encounter proved "very emotional" for Holbrooke. (Meeting in the lobby of the St. Regis, he recalls, "we just hugged each other before we even said, 'Hello.'") Proclaiming her "dazzling, absolutely dazzling," Holbrooke runs through a few of Jarrett's charms before noting, "Above all, she seems to embody and even channel what Barack Obama stands for."

During their get-to-know-you session, Jarrett tried to give Holbrooke a feel for both of the Obamas before moving to grill him about his own past—and future. "We spoke at length about ways in which he could serve his country," recalls Jarrett. "I was very impressed with the depth and breadth of his experience, as well as his deep sense of patriotism." Afterward, Jarrett "shared her impressions of him" with the president-elect. This is as revealing as she cares to be about the matter. But, following reported discussions among key players (including Hillary Clinton) about how to maximize Holbrooke's skill set, the former United Nations ambassador found himself with a shiny new title: Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Whatever official positions Valerie Jarrett has held in Obamaland through the years—finance chair for the 2004 Senate campaign, senior adviser to the presidential run, co-chair of the transition, and now White House Senior Advisor and Assistant to the President for Inter-

governmental Affairs and Public Engagement (try squeezing *that* onto your average business card)—her larger purpose has remained fairly constant: She is Obama's proxy-in-chief. Other team members may have more experience with policy (especially foreign policy) or national politics, but arguably no one knows more about the Obama brand or enjoys a greater level of presidential trust. Which is why, for Holbrooke, among many others, winning Jarrett's approval was the next best thing to winning the president's.

But this role, however powerful and glamorous and, let's face it, fun, is also a bit trickier than one might imagine. It calls for Jarrett to walk a fine line: on the one hand, conveying a sense of her own substance and stature (to reassure people they aren't being pawned off on some ineffectual crony); on the other, keeping the spotlight trained on her boss (to avoid looking as though she's promoting her own agenda). Stray too far in one direction, and people won't take her seriously; too far in the opposite direction, and she loses value as presidential stand-in. Caught between these contradictory imperatives, what's the world's most influential right-hand woman to do?

SEATED AT THE HEAD of a small, Queen Anne conference table tucked just inside the doorway of her slightly shabby West Wing office, Jarrett—with her stylish pixie haircut, double-breasted khaki dress, black cardigan, Prada belt, and hefty diamond earrings—looks a shade too well-heeled for the part of public servant. But, as the president's official outreach czar, she is the goodwill ambassador to constituencies ranging from governors to school superintendents to airline executives to black leaders to gay-rights advocates to that guy in your cousin Earl's Rotary Club who thinks the energy crisis can be solved using giant hamster wheels and hordes of grade-school kids hopped up on Skittles. Whatever concern, request, or bit of inspiration someone longs to convey to this White House, Jarrett's office is the place to call.

The post is to some degree an extension of Jarrett's work during the presidential campaign, when she was forever taking on delicate diplomatic missions that, for whatever reason, Obama himself couldn't tackle. Post-primaries, when disappointed Hillary diehards were being coaxed into the fold, Jarrett

spearheaded the drive. Even more critically, early in the race, she took the lead in making nice with old-school civil rights leaders. With proper tending by Jarrett, compulsive gadflies like Al Sharpton remained surprisingly well-behaved. And, when the occasional storm did erupt—think Jesse Jackson's expressed desire to geld Obama—Jarrett moved swiftly to restore calm.

These days, Jarrett's envoy duties encompass just about everyone and everything. When Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, and California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger wanted a meeting with Obama about infrastructure revitalization, Rendell asked Jarrett to make it happen. The nation's mayors have been conferring regularly with Jarrett since before the inauguration on subjects ranging from health care to stimulus dollars. And then there is the nurturing of the business community, which Jarrett, a former CEO herself, has adopted as a pet project. Already, she has arranged numerous sit-downs with bankers, airline officials, hotel execs, high-tech moguls, and so on. This month, in response to grumbling about the public-option portion of Obama's health care proposal, Jarrett appeared at the quarterly meeting of the politically conservative Business Roundtable to field concerns and make her pitch. In such cases, Jarrett's corporate background is assumed to make her a savvy, more empathetic ear, but her presidential proxy status is just as key. As one of Jarrett's colleagues explains, "Most CEOs consider themselves to be very important people—someone who demands a high level of attention."

Traditionally, constituent service hasn't been handled by top advisers: All that ego-stroking and dander-soothing can be more than a little trying. (If you think watching Al Sharpton on television is enervating, imagine having him periodically phone to critique your boss.) "Those sorts of constituency jobs were always kind of an afterthought," says Hillary Rosen, a communications consultant and former head of the Recording Industry Association of America. In a White House forever hawking its openness and accessibility, however, outreach has been decreed a priority. And what better way to demonstrate this than by putting an Obama intimate in charge of the effort?

In any number of areas, a nod from Jarrett is now regarded as tantamount to a presidential seal of approval. When a handful of Obama-friendly consultants were looking to form a trade association that would serve as a counterweight

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to Republican-leaning groups like the Roundtable, some of the founders approached Jarrett for input. "Just having her say, 'Yes, this would be helpful,' helped the organization as people were deciding whether or not to participate," explains one of those involved. And, when Jarrett made an appearance at the group's March coming-out party at the Hay Adams, he added, that really put the organization "on the map." A similar dynamic prevails even inside the White House. Says a colleague, "People are anxious to have Valerie take on whatever their issue would

be just because they know that 'OK, well, if Valerie's into it, it's gonna happen.'"

JARRETT'S MANNER is strikingly un-Washington: She evinces none of the self-importance, harried impatience, or borderline exhaustion you'd expect from one of the president's closest aides. Her voice is soft and loose, she has an easy smile, and the brown eyes peering through frameless, rectangular specs project unhurried interest.

This low-key style is by far Jarrett's most oft-cited asset. "What's impressed

me is that she hasn't tried to dominate any meeting at all," says Salt Lake City mayor Ralph Becker, who lauds Jarrett as "self-effacing" and a good listener in a profession better known for its big talkers. Pennsylvania's Rendell, who phones Jarrett frequently in his capacity as head of the National Governors Association, puts it more bluntly: "Normally, people who are close to the president of the United States, in whatever administration, are totally full of themselves." But with Jarrett, says Rendell, "there is no ego involved." Observes Rosen, "In her mind, everything she does or that happens around her office is a reflection of the president, not of her. It's kind of unusual."

Unusual, but also savvy. Jarrett's pronounced egolessness isn't just good manners; more strategically, it reassures people that she is a clean conduit to the president, an honest broker operating without a hidden agenda. And, no matter how naturally unassuming Jarrett's personality, she is also clearly deliberate in presenting herself as a modest supporting player. Talking with constituents (or reporters), Jarrett does not lead with her own opinion. When sharing her perspective, she couches it in terms of the president's thoughts or those of his advisers as a whole. It is a diplomatic tactic, posit colleagues, that she picked up during her years in Chicago City Hall. More broadly, Jarrett has an allergy to talking about herself. Asked about her assets or influence, she prefers to gush about all the fabulous folks she has been meeting in her new job. Whenever possible, she steers the conversation back to her boss's strengths, vision, and governing philosophy. Failing that, she has a wicked habit of deflecting inquiries by feigning cluelessness. Talk with her often enough, and certain conversational patterns emerge: What value-added does she bring to Obama? "That's not a question I could answer. You'd have to ask him." How was she first received by Washington insiders? "Hmmm. People wouldn't really come up to me and say, 'Here's what I think of you.'"

Of course, when you're the president's political wise woman, blowing your own horn is unnecessary. Others happily do it for you as they line up to kiss your, um, ring. Jarrett's ability not to be swayed by all this fuss will determine how she fares in her current role. It isn't easy being an über-powerful guru and also a humble blank slate. But, without that balance, Valerie Jarrett would be just another hotshot adviser in a town already lousy with them.

MICHELLE COTTLE



Valerie Jarrett knows it's not easy being the president's right-hand woman.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: AP PHOTO/AHID SALEMI; AP PHOTO/THIBAUT CAMUS; AP PHOTO/MARKUS SCHREIBER; AP PHOTO/BEN CURTIS

Uprising in Iran

THE BYSTANDER

Obama grapples with the revolution.

IN THE AFFAIRS of states, lessons are often learned too late or too well. Faced with unexpected crises and unwelcome demands for prompt decision-making, governments think by analogy. And they are invariably keen to demonstrate that they have learned from their—or, more conveniently, their predecessors'—mistakes.

The last time a Democrat occupied the White House, an inherited humanitarian mission in Somalia turned to disaster in the alleys of Mogadishu. An important lesson had to be learned: Committing troops to African conflicts of little strategic import to the United States was no longer on the table. And so came to pass a genocide in Rwanda—during which there is no question that a “Somalia effect” darkened the considerations of every U.S. and U.N. official who weighed what kind of response would be possible.

So Rwanda would pay the price for Somalia. Conversely, Bosnia—very late and highly imperfectly—benefited from an intervention prompted in part by the shame of Rwanda. After Bosnia, the international community concluded that another Balkan genocide at the hands of Milošević would not stand, and so, Kosovo was freed from his murderous grip. From there, in the frightened strategic environment after September 11, it was not so great a leap to Baghdad and the removal of its tyrant.

And now, to Tehran in June 2009 and its remarkable Green Revolution. For the Obama administration, which rose to power on the president's early opposition to the Iraq war, there would be no question of learning the lessons of Iraq too late. The Bush administration's freedom agenda, executed with such incompetence, would be dismissed in favor of a more nuanced engagement with a complex world. The lessons of Iraq would be married to the lessons of U.S.-Iranian relations, in particular the 1953 CIA-sponsored coup against the secular nationalist Mohammad Mossadegh, surely among the most disastrous strategic errors committed by the United States.

The focus, therefore, was on avoiding the perception of “meddling” at all costs in order to deny the regime hardliners a convenient scapegoat for the challenge posed in the streets. And yet, in this abundance of caution—an overlearning of the twin lessons, one might say—an opportunity to provide legitimate support to the popular movement when it mattered most was lost. And, just as crucially, a signal was sent to those very same hardliners that the United States's eagerness to negotiate would override its solidarity with the protesters.

In Washington, the debate quickly descended along familiar lines into an extraordinarily parochial and self-involved exchange of accusations between liberals and neoconservatives. That there are few lessons to be learned from the cheerleaders of the Iraq war—and even fewer from those on the Republican right desperate to find a chink in the president's still-formidable armor—goes without saying. But that should not be the end of strategic thinking about Iran; rather, it should be the beginning.

It seems likely that Obama had his own doubts about the degree of reticence he could live with. Having started meekly with an early warning that the “world is watching,” the administration

ratcheted up its rhetoric just as the resistance was breaking on June 21, when it said that the United States would “bear witness.” By June 23, the president stated he was “appalled and outraged,” and even said that the government in Tehran “must govern through consent and not coercion.”

While the president demonstrated a refreshing ability to adapt his position, his last forthright statement of principle was reminiscent of a final encore to an emptying concert hall. The color green is receding from the streets of Tehran, the young protestors are going into hiding, and the leaders of the opposition are being comprehensively arrested. A prisoner of conventional thinking on Iran, the most popular American president in a generation was effectively rolled by a cartel of aging, unelected theocrats into believing that a strong statement of support for democracy could be manipulated into an imperialist intervention. Why Obama believed that the Iranian people would fail to distinguish 1953 from 2009—or even George W. Bush from Barack Hussein Obama—remains a mystery. Not all “meddling” is equal, and because an American president once acted to thwart Iran's popular will does not mean that this president cannot speak out in its defense. Alas, this was a loss of nerve with likely dire consequences.

First, a movement for greater pluralism and the rule of law that was manifestly to the advantage of the United States has been silenced. Second, an emboldened hardline leadership will likely present even greater conditions for meeting with the United States and, at those negotiations, prove more reluctant still to seek common ground. Were this a matter simply for Iran, or for U.S.-Iranian relations, it would be bad enough. But there is a third, more ominous threat looming on the horizon—an Israeli military strike on Iran's nuclear installations.

There is no serious alternative to an adversarial engagement with Iran that includes all key bilateral issues, beginning with areas of common interest and ending with the nuclear question. But, by allowing the regime to dictate the lessons of 1953, and honoring too little and too late the people's movement of June 2009, the president has made an exceedingly difficult task all the harder for himself. An outstretched hand needs to be directed by a head held high—confident in its own principles and values, responsive to the aspirations of the Iranian people, and signaling to the regime that two can play the game of tough-minded diplomacy.

ABOVE MY FATHER'S DESK hangs a portrait of my grandfather, posing somberly in the dress uniform of a justice of Iran's Supreme Court. A religiously observant but politically secular nationalist politician, newspaper editor, and Supreme Court justice before becoming Minister of Justice, he was emblematic of Iran's fitful struggle for modernity. He would have been the first to concede the contradictions and limitations of the achievements of his era; he himself was intermittently imprisoned for opposing Reza Shah's authoritarian excesses.

Still, over the past 30 years' traumatic rule of the Islamic Republic—with its wars, torture chambers, reaction, and repression—his portrait served as an intimate reminder of another Iran, past and perhaps future. And the inscription at the bottom of the painting, stating that it was a gift from the Jewish community of Iran in thanks for his efforts to secure equal rights for its

members, was a quiet rebuke to the buffoonish hostility to the Jewish state that has helped define the current regime.

With its improvised idealism and victory signs, and its fearless, still unbelievable chants of “*marg bar diktator*” echoing down Tehran’s boulevards, this was an unprecedented moment in Iranian history. And yet, I suspect my grandfather would recognize in the past week’s democratic defiance a kindred spirit of individual rights and freedom from arbitrary justice. If, as it seems for now, this shall remain a dream deferred, it nonetheless has deep roots in Iran’s century-long constitutional struggle.

A day will come when the leadership of Iran will reflect the desire of the vast ma-

jority of its citizens for greater openness and freedom. And by then, it will likely matter a great deal less whether the power across the ocean is friend or foe, true to its ideals or coolly timid, a force in the Middle East or a mere bystander to events.

For now, the Obama administration—cautious, aloof, un-dogmatic, and un-meddling—has born successful “witness” to the brief life and brutal death of Iran’s Green Revolution. The “Iraq effect” has claimed the Obama era’s first victim, though likely not its last.

NADER MOUSAVIZADEH

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DAWN OF THE REVOLT

My travels with Mousavi.

MAY 23RD: Tehran’s Azadi Indoor Stadium, 20 days before the election. The press had difficulty getting in the gates. “All full,” the guards kept telling us. And full it was, overflowing in fact, for a Mir Hossein Mousavi campaign rally. Mousavi wasn’t even there. Instead, the rally featured former President Mohammad Khatami and Mousavi’s wife, Zahra Rahnavard, and the eager crowd numbered more than 20,000. I couldn’t make my way to the VIP section, and I didn’t want to. I was happy to be crushed among the thousands of cheering—ecstatic even—Iranians who gave birth to the “green wave.”

It was not supposed to end like this. After all, this is why Khatami, the only early favorite to defeat Ahmadinejad at the polls on June 12, dropped out of the presidential race, isn’t it? That’s what we all assumed in the weeks and days leading up to 6/12. Yes, 6/12. Khatami would never be allowed to win. *Kayhan*, Iran’s conservative daily and the Supreme Leader’s mouthpiece, said as much, even threatening him, in a thinly veiled editorial, with assassination.

Mir Hossein Mousavi, we thought, posed no such threat to the conservatives—the landlords, let’s call them. His chances of winning weren’t exactly good, even as recently as six weeks before the election. “If the turnout is in the twenty-five-million range, we will be guests of Mr. Ahmadinejad for another four years.” That was Sadegh Kharrazi—former ambassador to Paris, deputy foreign minister, and an influential reformist who also has close ties to the Supreme Leader—

speaking at the end of April. It was another late-night salon at his house, filled with photos of himself with Ayatollah Khamenei. “Ahmadinejad has ten to twelve million votes,” he said, a number echoed by virtually everyone I spoke to, “and he’ll win if the turnout is low.” He wasn’t being pessimistic—just realistic. I was a realist then, too.

The Mousavi campaign’s early strategy, one of getting out the vote to counter Ahmadinejad’s solid base, raised no eyebrows, but it began to pay dividends, and a fever for the democratic process started to afflict many previously apathetic Iranians. “If the majority doesn’t vote, the minority rules,” proclaimed billboards, rather more poetically in Persian, that I saw all over town at the end of May. Ayatollah Rafsanjani had paid for that one, his image next to the words. If the fever held, there would be enough votes to force a second-round runoff. Mousavi was going to win any runoff, and win big. Ahmadinejad might have his ten to twelve million, but he couldn’t possibly defeat Mousavi if the entire opposition coalesced around one candidate. It wasn’t as if Ahmadinejad’s campaign didn’t know this. Its strategy from the start had been to win outright in the first round, but his campaign was anemic compared to Mousavi’s, which grew stronger by the rally, with the ever-popular Khatami front and center much of the time. I almost went with Khatami to Ahvaz, on May 30, when the plane he was to have caught back to Tehran was discovered to have a bomb aboard. The landlords weren’t whispering anymore. They had never seriously fought this kind of battle before. “If it’s over thirty million, [we win],” Khatami had said to me in mid-May over tea in his office in a villa in Jamaran, Ayatollah Khomeini’s old com-

pound in North Tehran. “Are you staying for the election?” he asked me. “No, but I’ll come back for the second round,” I told him. “There won’t be a second round; we will win outright on June 12.” Strong words coming from a cautious man two weeks before the election.

And, based on what I had seen in Iran over the last month, maybe Khatami was right. I tried, really tried, to find where Ahmadinejad’s support was going to come from if he was going to add to his base, to defeat three challengers who were all gaining popularity. Outside of Tehran? Whether on the road, or in truck stops, cafés, and other cities, I saw more enthusiasm for the opposition than for the president, which surprised me. Even in south Tehran, his supposed base in the capital, I found Ahmadinejad detractors. Not that Ahmadinejad didn’t have supporters everywhere. It was just that they seemed to be apathetic. Perhaps that’s the lot of an incumbent candidate steering a discontented nation. Not one Ahmadinejad supporter tried to convert me to their cause, or even bothered to make a compelling case. Maybe that’s why the twelve million or so mythical Iranians who braved long lines, thunderstorms, and 100-degree-plus temperatures to vote for Mahmoud Ahmadinejad didn’t celebrate on the streets when their man won his landslide. Even the ten or twelve million who probably *did* vote for him were reluctant to come out and cheer, at least until they were asked, two days later. And, even then, the photo of his victory rally was clumsily photoshopped, presumably by Mahmoud’s experts, to illustrate a sea of Iranians for Ahmadinejad where there was only a pond.

Nearly 40 million voted in Iran’s presidential election, 63 percent for the sitting president, according to his very own Interior Ministry. It took a day or so, but that’s when it struck me and all the other dismayed Iranians: Of course, they were never going let *anyone* but Ahmadinejad win. That’s why his campaign was anemic, that’s why he didn’t seem to care that his challengers were gaining on him. This had never happened before. Iranian elections have always been generally fair.

Thirty years have passed since the revolution, exactly 30 years, and Iranians aren’t mad that Ahmadinejad won reelection. They’re mad that the one thing—the one and only element of democracy—they had left, their vote, is now meaningless. Stop looking at Tehran, the government keeps saying, you’re misreading the country. You in the West don’t understand Iran, it bleats; you don’t know that Ahmadinejad really *did* have

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all the support of the country. It's only the Westernized elite in Tehran who are unhappy, and the West and Zionists (always the Zionists) are stirring things up. Iran's very own Useful Idiots in the West parrot their line, lending credence to outdated polls, to mathematical analyses that tell Iranians who are giving their lives for the right to a legitimate vote that they are dying for a lie. OK, then how about Shiraz, how about Isfahan, Mashhad, Tabriz, all the places we know people don't believe you, where people have *died* because they don't believe you? These Iranians didn't start by protesting the regime, the *nezam*, as the Supreme Leader called it; they weren't protesting anything but for their right to their vote. Mir Hossein Mousavi wasn't waging a campaign to bring down the *nezam*. He only wanted to be a better president than Ahmadinejad, to secure renters' rights in a nation of landlords, and that wasn't a crime until now.

What started out as an outpouring of anger has turned into a battle royale for the soul of a nation. Or a battle to allow the nation a soul. What delicious irony that Ayatollah Hashemi Rafsanjani, a founder of the *nezam*, a man Iranians couldn't bring themselves to vote for the last time, would be on the protestors' side. Who would have thought that Ali Larijani, speaker of Parliament, obedient son of the Revolution, and close confidant of the Supreme Leader, would suggest, in contradiction of his mentor, that the Guardian Council, which is supposed to be checking, has erred? Iran's leadership cracked, and the fissures are widening. The landlords' security teams might quell the protests, life may return to something resembling normal. The landlords still have a large portion of the population behind them, the ten to twelve million, maybe more, plus all the guns. (If the West, or Iranians in opposition movements abroad, try to hijack the protests for their own causes, they'll have more, much more.) And Mousavi, the unlikely hero of 6/12, may or may not continue the fight. But Iranians won't forget. They won't forget the dead, the prisoners, and the brutality of their landlords. At a pre-election press conference that I heard about, one Mousavi campaign manager was asked about the brutality of his *nezam*, way back, when he was prime minister in the 1980s. The staffer answered, "We were all Ahmadinejads then." After 6/12, we Iranians are all Mousavis now, even those who voted for Ahmadinejad, whether they know it yet or not.

HOUMAN MAJD

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PERSIAN PUZZLEMENT

What our spies don't know.

ABOUT TEN DAYS after the start of Iran's insurrection, I asked a senior administration official what, if anything, the White House knew about the people behind the demonstrations. His reply: "I think it is fair to say senior administration officials are busily trying to understand how the opposition is generated and where it came from." In other words, there's a lot about the protesters we still don't know.

True, Mir Hossein Mousavi and the people directly surrounding him are known quantities in the U.S. intelligence community. Both Mousavi and his most powerful ally during the campaign, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, were key interlocutors in the Iran-Contra affair. (It was Mousavi's office—working through a deputy named Mohsen Kangarlu—that arranged the details of the exchange of TOW missiles for the release of American hostages kidnapped by Hezbollah in Lebanon.) We also know that Mousavi was a strong supporter of Iran's modern nuclear program. In 2007, Tehran handed over documents to the International Atomic Energy Agency showing that Mousavi approved a decision to purchase centrifuge technology from A.Q. Khan's clandestine black market in 1987. Meanwhile, the Mousavi campaign's head of "voter protection" is Ali Akbar Mohtashemi-Pur, who is generally credited with helping to found Hezbollah. During the Lebanon war, he lost his right hand when he opened a book on Shia holy places laden with explosives.

And yet, for all these details, we know very little about the movement that seems to have sprung up around these men almost overnight. "We think we know about Mousavi's organization," one intelligence official told me. "But it looks like he is linking it up with something deeper." A U.S. diplomat who has been monitoring the situation put it this way: "We are getting plenty of reports. But we have no idea what is going on."

THIS IS not the first time U.S. intelligence has been caught off guard by an Iranian movement. A CIA estimate from August 1978 concluded, "Iran is not in a revolutionary or even a pre-revolutionary situation." Five months later, the world watched the first Islamic revolution.

Part of the problem today is that most of our spies are focused on Iran's nuclear program and the regime's support for in-

ternational terrorism. Along those lines, the U.S. military was able to acquire detailed information about the explosives Iran exported to the Iraqi insurgency between 2006 and 2008. By comparison, our spies have been largely disinterested in recent years when it came to Iran's democracy movement. It was left, for example, to private citizens to help Ahmad Batebi—who graced the cover of *The Economist* during the 1999 student uprising—escape to the United States.

Washington hasn't been completely divorced from Iranian civil society, of course. The State Department under President Bush made a show of financial support for Iranian democrats, requesting a \$75-million program to back Iranian civil society in 2006. Foggy Bottom has also funded some projects aimed at evading Internet censorship with an eye toward China and Iran. And, earlier this year, State conducted a Web chat with Iranian scholars on Howard Baskerville, an American missionary who participated in Iran's early twentieth-century Constitutional Revolution and is considered the "American Lafayette."

The budgets of organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy and the International Republican Institute have also funded Iranian democracy promotion. Moreover, there have been projects that did not rely on government funding: In 2005, the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict sponsored a seminar in Dubai that was attended by Iranians—some of whom were later arrested by the regime.

But these efforts, whatever their virtues, were fundamentally modest in scope. A lot of the State Department money for civil society went to the Voice of America and Radio Farda. What's more, a portion of the money for programs in Iran remains unspent. "I would never be so arrogant to say the short period of time we administered grants to Iranians was able to affect the events we are now seeing in Iran," says David Denehy, the State Department official who oversaw grants for Iranian democracy promotion between 2005 and 2007. (Denehy did say he thought the programs aimed at opening up the Internet have had some impact.) Moreover, the number of Iranian activists with whom these programs established contact is just too small to give us any good sense of who is leading the democracy movement today. We may know some of the people who attended the seminar in Dubai, for instance, but it's difficult to know whom those attendees later trained and what they are doing today.

Andrew Apostolou, senior program manager at Freedom House, says that, for the most part, the United States was late to the party. "The Dutch were the pioneers in this field, allocating money for Iranian civil society in 2004," he says. "The U.S. only committed large amounts as of 2006, and most of that was for broadcast media. Civil society is a long-term investment."

THIS HASN'T stopped the Iranian government from seeing the hand of the United States everywhere. Several Iranian-Americans have been arrested in recent years—including Haleh Esfandiari, the Woodrow Wilson International Center scholar detained in 2007 while visiting her infirm mother—and accused of fomenting plots to overturn the Islamic Republic through nonviolent means. A propaganda video produced last year by the Ettelaat, Iran's internal security service, featured a fictional meeting with John McCain, George Soros, a CIA officer, and the godfather of strategic nonviolent action, Gene Sharp—all plotting the overthrow of the government. The narrator encouraged Iranians to call a hotline at the intelligence ministry to inform on any neighbors caught up in the McCain-Soros-Sharp plot.

Since Sharp is supposedly the intellectual linchpin of plans to overthrow the regime, I thought he might know something about the protesters. Unfortunately, he seems to be stuck in much the same position as the U.S. government: forced to make guesses about the Iranian freedom movement from afar. Sharp, who has been observing the events in Tehran from the Albert Einstein Institution in Boston, has offered techniques and advice to people-power movements for 40 years but says he is not in touch with organizers of the Iranian revolt. "They have been doing some things within the category of nonviolent action," he says. "There are marches, a very symbolic kind of nonviolent action. There was one march that was silent, a hard thing to pull off." Sharp speculates that the objectives of the movement are changing from disgust at a perceived stolen election to a demand for real democracy. "At first this was about the election. Now they are talking about the regime's reaction and the Supreme Leader," he says. When asked what kind of odds he would give the demonstrators, he replies, "I am holding my breath." And, until it learns more, that is probably what the Obama administration is doing as well.

ELI LAKE

THE NEW DEMOCRATS

An intellectual history of the Green Wave.

WHAT WE are witnessing right now in the streets of Tehran is, first and foremost, a political battle for the future of the Iranian state. But closely linked to this political fight is also an old theological dispute about the nature of Shiism—a dispute that has been roiling Iran for more than a century.

Shiism, like most religions, is no stranger to heated schisms. Shia and Sunnis split over the question of whether Muhammad had designated his son-in-law, Ali, as his successor (Shia believed he had). Some Shia, called Alawites, believe the only divinely designated successor was Ali, while another group, Zaydis, believe there were four imams. A large, intellectually vibrant third group is known as the Ismailis because it believes the line of imams ended with the seventh, Ismail. And the largest Shia sect is called the Ithna Ashari—or the Twelvers. Dominant in Iran, they believe in twelve imams and posit that the last imam went into hiding some 1,100 years ago. His return, bloody and vengeful, will mark the redemptive dawn of the age of justice.

It is within this branch that a further split took place beginning in the late nineteenth century—the moment when the Iranian elite began to confront the challenge of modernity. Ideas like rationalism, individualism, constitutionalism, rule of law, equality, democracy, secularism, privacy, and separation of powers began to find currency in Iran's political discourse. By 1905, these ideas, prevalent primarily among the intelligentsia, led to the Constitutional Revolution—the first of its kind in the Muslim world. The Shia clergy were faced with a historic challenge not unlike what the Catholic Church experienced with the advent of the Renaissance. How two rival ayatollahs reacted to that challenge would divide Iranian Shiism—and lay the groundwork for what is taking place today.

OVER THE YEARS, many scholars, both in Iran and the West, have argued over the years that Shiism shares less with Islam than with pre-Islamic Persian ideas. They point to the fact that, while Iran became Muslim in the seventh century, it refused to accept Arabic as its language. Islam won the battle, these historians argue, but pre-Islamic ways and values won the war by surviving in a Shia veneer.

As an example, they cite the Zoroastrian belief in messianic eschatology. The messianic role of the twelfth imam, they say, is essentially a Muslim version of the same Zoroastrian idea. Shiism, according to this view, is really a thinly disguised form of Iranian nationalism. And this helps explain why so much of Iran's political debate has over the years played out in the realm of theology.

The roots of Iran's current divide to a great extent lie at the turn of the century, when the country's ayatollahs essentially split into two camps on questions of religion and politics. The first was led by Ayatollah Na'ini, an advocate of what is called the "Quietist" school of Shiism—today best exemplified in the character and behavior of Ayatollah Sistani in

The roots of Iran's current divide to a great extent lie at the turn of the century.

Iraq. According to Na'ini, true "Islamic government" could only be established when the twelfth imam returned. Such a government would be the government of God on earth: Its words, deeds, laws, and courts would be absolute and could tolerate no errors. But humans, Na'ini said, were fallible and thus ill-fitted to the sacred task of establishing God's government. As the pious await the return of the infallible twelfth imam, they must in the interim search for the best form of government. And the form most befitting this period, Na'ini argued, was constitutional democracy. The role of ayatollahs under this arrangement would be to "advise" the rulers and ensure that laws inimical to *sharia* were not implemented. But it would not be to rule the country themselves.

Opposing Na'ini was an ayatollah named Nuri. He dismissed democracy and the rule of law as inferior alternatives to the divine, eternal, atemporal, non-errant wisdom embodied in the Koran and *sharia*. As Ayatollah Khomeini would declare more than once, his own ideas were nothing but an incarnation of Nuri's arguments. But for the moment, at least, those ideas were on the defensive. It would be decades before they would reemerge to dominate Iranian politics.

Na'ini's paradigm, and the idea that Shiism must reinvent itself, continued to beget newer and more radical interpretations. During the Reza Shah period (1925–1941), as the clergy came under direct pressure from a forced secularism modeled on Atatürk's Turkey, a number

of ideas critical of traditional Shiism began to take shape. Iranian reformers at the time called for a more rational, less rigid Shiism, and an end to the self-mutilation that takes place annually in honor of the third imam's martyrdom. They went so far as to advocate abolishing the dominant role of the clergy. Even in the conservative city of Qom, reformist ideas about Shiism found popularity in a magazine published by the son of a cleric. Ayatollah Khomeini's first book was a response to these arguments, calling them sacrilege and asking the pious to cleanse the nation of such heretical ideas.

The 1940s in Iran were a period of rising political aspirations. Marxist ideas began to dominate the intellectual discourse, while democratic ideas began to permeate middle-class life. Faced with these new challenges, Shiism again tried to reinvent itself in ways that made it intellectually competitive. Mehdi Bazargan, at the time a professor of engineering—and destined to become the first prime minister of the Islamic Republic—tried to use the laws of thermodynamics to prove the existence of God. Another activist, based in the city of Mashhad, founded a group called the Movement of God-Worshipping Socialists, arguing that, long before Marx, Muhammad had been a proletarian revolutionary. In the smithy of this city's rapidly changing intellectual landscape, two young men were educated. One was named Ali Khamenei, and the other was named Ali Shariati.

Today, Khamenei is the intransigent and embattled Supreme Leader. And Shariati, who some have called the Luther of Shiism, would become his faith's most influential reformer. His eclectic use of Marx, Freud, Sartre, and Fanon, and his attempt to combine them with elements of Shia faith, allowed him to create an ideology appealing to the intelligentsia and the Iranian middle class. It was part fashionable piety (the way Kabbalah is the spiritual fad of Hollywood) and part facile radicalism. From Fanon, he borrowed the idea of the redemptive power of violence, and from Marx, he learned about the evils of alienation. He called for a Shiism bereft of the clergy, accusing them of offering a reactionary and deeply neutered rendition of Islam. What he lacked in theoretical rigor and intellectual depth he more than made up for with the power of his oratory. To many in the current generation of reformists, he is known simply as "the teacher." He provided the possibility of a new reading of Shiism—one as compatible with Marx's idea of praxis as with Muhammad's notion of piety.

But, as soon became evident, Shariati's ultimate goal was less the reform of Shiism than using it as an instrument for social change. Many of today's reformists, though inspired by his ideas, have not adopted this "instrumental" disposition toward their religion. Ironically, however, one person who *did* come to share Shariati's "instrumental" attitude toward Islam was Ayatollah Khomeini. And this is an area where the traditions of Na'ini and Nuri—that is, reform and absolutism—would combine to legitimize despotism.

Before coming to power, Khomeini argued that the most important duty, indeed the *raison d'être* of an Islamic government, was to implement fully the tenets of *sharia*. But once in power and faced with the complexities of modern Iranian society, he subtly changed the very foundation of his theory. He introduced the concept of *maslaha*—interests of the regime—and declared, much to the consternation of nearly every other ayatollah, that these interests, as determined by him or his successor, would supersede even the fundamentals of Islam. In other words, the state was everything—and *sharia* was nothing but its legitimizing narrative, a narrative that could be suspended at the will of the leader.

Khomeini muddled the Na'ini and Nuri traditions in another way as well: Aware that people wanted democracy in 1979, he pretended to be in the Na'ini camp. He even promised that he wouldn't allow a single cleric to hold a position of executive authority. After taking office, however, he would use an iron fist to implement the Nuri vision.

Iranians rightly felt stung by this development. But reformers in the Na'ini tradition did not give up. Betrayed by Khomeini, they became as interested in political strategy as in theological innovation. Saeed Hajjarian, once a mastermind of the regime's intelligence agency, turned into an Andropov-style reformer. He argued that a frontal assault on the country's bastions of power was impractical. Instead, he called for his allies to mobilize the masses and use them as bargaining chips with Iran's rulers—a strategy by which he thought reformers could gradually chip away at the absolute power of the clerics. Other reformers, foremost among them Akbar Ganji, dismissed Hajjarian's strategy as unworkable. The only way out of the current morass, Ganji said, was to use the invincible power of peaceful civil disobedience.

Then there were the ideas of Iranian intellectual Abdolkarim Soroush. Around 1990, he published a seminal

series of articles questioning the epistemological foundations of Khomeini's concept of *velayat-e-faqih*, the guardianship of the jurist. Soroush argued that any cognition of sacred text is ultimately no more than a mere mortal's cognition—and thus, contingent and relative, not absolute. Privileging one person's reading of these texts over others, he said, was an arbitrary political decision with no theological validity. Not surprisingly, Soroush's essays created an uproar in Iran. Apologists for the regime attacked him for channeling "Zionist" ideas, while many in the reform movement began to apply the same decidedly democratic principles to other arenas. The essays were also the beginning of Soroush's own odyssey, which took him from being an ally—if not a theorist—of the regime to being one of its most intractable and influential critics.

In recent years, many Shia intellectuals have traveled the same path as Soroush. Hitherto sacred topics—the life of the prophet, the nature of his mission, the meaning of the Koran, the place of metaphor in sacred texts, and, most importantly, the role of women—have been hotly debated. Those who voted for Khatami in 1997; the student movement of 1999; the recent struggle of the bus drivers' union for the rights of its workers; the relentlessly defiant but peaceful women's movement, particularly the attempt to solicit one million signatures in favor of reforming discriminatory laws; and, now, the green uprising of 2009—all owe something to the tradition that Na'ini established more than 100 years ago.

This tradition has not always found itself on the side of the angels: For instance, many Na'ini disciples, worried about the creeping influence of communism, supported the Shah against Mossadeq in 1953. Moreover, like any diffuse intellectual tradition, it has spawned its share of destructive ideas and has sometimes been co-opted by its opponents. But it has also achieved something very valuable: It has kept alive the hope, through heady times and dark ones, that a different Shiism, and therefore a different Iran, was possible. Just as Shiism has been a thinly disguised manifestation of Iranian nationalism, the reform movement has been, from Na'ini to Mousavi, a thinly pious veneer for a country's relentless quest for democracy.

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The World is Bumpy

Deglobalization and its dangers.

JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

ON INNUMERABLE TRIPS to Singapore over the past decade, I always made sure to stop by the Old Tanglin Officers' Mess, the city-state's version of the State Department. There, amid a street of gleaming colonial-style buildings and perfectly trimmed tropical foliage, the best diplomats in Asia—fluent English-speakers with a staggering command of regional politics and sharply tailored suits—would entertain me at the after-work bar. Sipping cold drinks, they would laughingly spin tales of how their tiny country, with some four-and-a-half million people, had outmaneuvered giant neighbors like Indonesia, winning this trade concession and that security deal with the United States or other big powers. By the end of the night, often quite late, I'd climb into my taxi, zoom off toward the glittering skyline, and marvel at how Singapore had built a modern nation out of a swamp in only 40 years.

There was much to marvel at. By embracing free trade and the global hunt for talent, Singapore had become an export powerhouse, building, among other things, one of the world's largest ports. It had accumulated foreign-currency reserves worth more than \$170 billion, in a country that was essentially a swampy backwater at independence from Great Britain in 1963. It had fostered some of the most powerful companies in Asia, like aviation giant Singapore Airlines, probably one of the most efficient carriers in the world. It boasted a GDP per capita of more than \$50,000, greater than all but four Western nations.

But now, Singapore has become a different type of example. As the financial crisis sweeps the globe, the city-state is facing the direst crisis in its history. In the first quarter of 2009, Singapore's economy plunged a staggering 20 percent—Great Depression-level numbers. At Singapore's port, the largest in the world by volume of goods shipped, freighters sit docked for weeks with no orders to move. The government's sovereign wealth fund this year admitted it has lost nearly 25 percent of its assets. Overall, the economy is expected to contract by more than 6.5 percent for the entire year, a downturn that would make the U.S. economy look like a party by comparison, and would make Singapore the worst-performing economy in Asia this year. And, though Singapore has been known for political stability, the downturn is starting to fluster even its normally secure rulers. On the Internet, the main forum for criticism of the government, Singaporean writers are lashing out, once a rare phenomenon.

Singapore is hardly unique. In the 1990s and early 2000s, nations around the world witnessed the sweep of globalization—the growing integration of economies, societies, and political systems—and the democratization of trade, migration, technology, and information. In many developing nations, governments threw their countries' agriculture, resources, and services open to global competition and slashed subsidies for their domestic producers to force them to compete in global markets. Many countries provided incentives for the poor to migrate from farms to cities, where they began to manufacture goods for export to the West.

Many economists believed this global integration had become so deeply rooted it could never be undone. They were wrong. As the global financial crisis deepens, the world is undergoing exactly the reverse of the 1990s—a wrenching period of deglobalization in which governments throw up new walls and the ties binding nations together rapidly unravel. Nations like the United States, Japan, and Germany may suffer, but they will survive, as will powerful developing nations like China or Brazil that have large cash reserves, diversified economies, and enough political clout to protect their industries. On the other hand, poor and trade-dependent countries that remade their whole economies to take advantage of globalization will be devastated. Having opened up, these nations are now highly vulnerable to global financial currents, without the cash on hand to weather the storm. Perhaps even worse, these financial shifts are likely to spark massive social unrest and could take down one government after the next. If you thought globalization was destabilizing, just wait to see what deglobalization will do.

AFTER THE END of the cold war, globalization transformed economic and political systems in many developing countries. International trade boomed with the opening up of the former Eastern Bloc, the liberalization of China's economy, and the signing of numerous new trade deals like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The new round of global trade talks, launched in Doha in 2001, was named the "Doha Development Round," the word "development" highlighting the idea that trade benefited the poorest countries. As World Trade Organization (WTO) Director General Pascal Lamy said, through reforming the rules governing free trade, the richer nations would address the concerns of the poor, and "gains would accrue to developing countries, ... especially the least-developed countries amongst them."

Many poorer nations, which even through the 1980s had relied on high tariffs and subsidy programs to protect domestic farmers and manufacturers, threw open their economies. Across East Asia, developing countries like Cambodia and Bangladesh oriented their entire economies around exports, in particular creating garment sectors that sent cheap textiles to the West. According to the World Bank, by 2006, the garment sector accounted for the largest part of Cambodia's economy, making up some 80 percent of exports worth nearly \$2.5 billion. Developing nations like India reduced the bureaucratic impediments to exporting and also made it easier for foreign investors to come in. African nations that once had subsidized agriculture began, on the advice of the World Bank, to privatize farming, forcing growers to compete on the global market and produce more crops for export. And many of these countries, from Pakistan to the Philippines, liberalized labor laws in the 1990s, making it easier for their citizens to leave and find jobs in the Persian Gulf, Hong Kong, and other rich regions.

Poorer developing nations benefited enormously from this integration. After suffering through genocide, Rwanda enthusiastically embraced globalization, positioning itself as a services and information technology hub for East Africa; during some years in the 1990s, Rwanda posted staggering growth rates, one year growing by 13 percent. In Thailand, GDP expanded by more than 8 percent per year throughout the early '90s, and, even after the late '90s Asian financial crisis dented the country's economic boom, younger urban Thais still enjoyed lives dramatically different from older generations. Overall, according to *The Economist*, "The gap between real GDP growth in emerging markets and in rich countries widened from nothing in 1991 to about five points in 2007."

Yet, for all their celebrating, the champions of globalization in the rich world failed in their most important task: ensuring that global integration became permanent. One missed opportunity was the Doha Round negotiations, which have made no progress over the last decade in lowering trade barriers to benefit poor countries. Each trade round, usually named for the city where the talks take place, involves a series of negotiations during which WTO members are supposed to agree on certain permanent reductions of trade barriers; after reaching a set goal, the countries end the round and start a new one. Previous rounds have been largely responsible for the growth in global trade, but the Doha Round, launched in 2001 in the capital of Qatar, was largely stalled by the protectionist demands of the richer and more powerful countries. "The Doha Round was supposed to help the world's poor, by lowering subsidies that keep Mali's cotton out of textile mills, tariffs that limit the flow of Cambodian T-shirts and other clothes to shelves," Edward Gresser of the Progressive Policy Institute noted in *YaleGlobal Online*. "The big countries had a chance to help the poor and flopped."

Compounding these problems, in most rich nations, pro-integration leaders failed to convince their publics of the benefits of globalization. In the 1990s, for example, the Clinton administration pushed a range of free-trade deals—most notably NAFTA—but failed to develop an effective program for assisting American workers made redundant by free trade. The Clinton team also failed to reassure isolationists on the left or right—progressives, unions, members of Congress representing blue-collar districts, isolationist Republicans—that globalization

and immigration would benefit average voters. And public opinion mattered: Anti-trade sentiment made it harder for White House officials to embrace the Doha Round and prompted Barack Obama, on the campaign trail, to argue that the United States should revisit several bilateral free-trade deals, including ones with South Korea and Colombia. In Europe in 2005, French and Dutch voters overwhelmingly rejected a proposed EU constitution, damaging the idea of greater political and economic integration, which is key to globalization. It was a p.r. problem that would stall permanent progress significantly.

THE GLOBAL financial crisis has only underscored these failures. With no new trade rules in place, wealthy governments are free to impose all sorts of restrictions. And so they have: As the Carnegie Endowment's Uri Dadush notes, 70 percent of trade measures enacted since November 2008 have restricted trade, threatening a tit-for-tat trade war that he believes could prove more destructive than the Great Depression. Here at home, both the Bush and Obama administrations eagerly jumped into deglobalization. As part of the massive stimulus package, Obama and Congress have instituted a "Buy American" clause designed to favor American-made goods in projects that receive stimulus money. On the continent, the EU has imposed new subsidies to protect their already-coddled farmers, while larger, wealthier developing nations like China have instituted their own protections. The United States, European nations, and other developed economies have poured money into domestic industries, potentially violating trade rules in the process, and have used this support to pressure companies to relocate factories back from abroad.

Because of the crisis, as many as 700,000 more African babies could die before their first birthdays.

It is hard to disentangle how much of the hit these poor countries are taking is due to the global recession and how much of it is due to a process of deglobalization, but it is clear that, in these economic times, the new ties that have bound poorer nations with the developed world will cause those nations to fall harder than they might have otherwise. In Cambodia, as many as 70,000

workers in the garment industry have lost their jobs, and exports fell by 35 percent in the first quarter of 2009. In Bangladesh, which is also heavily dependent on garment exports and remittances, deglobalization and the global recession are taking a similar toll. Poor nations that mainly export commodities will fare the worst. In Congo, a major producer of copper and diamonds, projected growth in the economy will fall by more than half in 2009, and at least 300,000 miners in Congo have lost their jobs in the past year. Overall, the United Nations now predicts that Africa, largely dependent on commodity exports, will grow by roughly 2 percent this year, a measly figure on a continent that needs high growth to stave off poverty.

The new protectionism by richer nations goes well beyond trade restrictions. Worried about jobs, wealthy governments that once welcomed migrants are shipping them back home, even when they are highly skilled workers filling a specific niche. Washington recently passed legislation incentivizing companies that get bank-bailout money to hire Americans. Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, and other wealthy nations have instructed domestic companies to fire foreign workers before firing natives. To be sure, this policy will hurt rich countries: Throwing out migrants will all but ensure a decline in innovation and entrepreneurship. (Foreign-born entrepreneurs started roughly half of all new companies in Silicon Valley between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s.) Still, most Western nations, and larger developing countries like China, will be able to compensate with domestic workers and entrepreneurs. In poor and trade-dependent countries, however, the global rejection of migrant workers will prove far more destructive. Migrant workers returning home will deprive poor countries of remittance income. In countries like Bangladesh or the Philippines, both known for sending skilled workers abroad, remittances account for one of the largest sources of foreign exchange. Across Latin America, remittances have fallen 13 percent during the first few months of 2009. Overall, according to a study by the World Bank, the fall in remittances this year will cost poor nations some \$15 billion in income.

Poorer nations, too, will be the first to suffer as investors panicked by the crisis avoid riskier emerging markets, many of which already have required IMF and World Bank bailouts. The World Bank projects that net private

capital inflows into developing nations will have dropped by two-thirds between 2007 and 2009. The Bank found that the Democratic Republic of the Congo estimates it will lose \$1.8 billion in investment because of the crisis, a huge figure in one of the poorer nations in the world. Unable to find investors, many poor nations might have to cut critical social welfare programs; the World Bank estimates that, because of the crisis, as many as 700,000 more African infants could die before reaching their first birthdays.

Poor countries also may not be able to rely on foreign aid. Many major donors, like France and Italy, already have declared that they will cut back their aid programs, citing the global financial crisis. In an analysis of the crisis, the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development recently predicted a sharp drop in global aid flows. According to the *Financial Times*, the World Food Program has quietly begun cutting food-aid disbursements to poor nations because of cuts in funding from donor countries, and the newspaper found “reduced emergency food aid rations in Rwanda, for example, from 420 grams of cereals to 320 grams of cereals per person”—enough to possibly spark new waves of hunger.

As aid flows from the rich world fall, food prices will skyrocket because of new agricultural barriers imposed by richer nations, and economic growth will falter. Indeed, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization recently warned that local food prices are increasing rapidly in poor nations, putting staple foods beyond the reach of average people. In February, when I visited Malawi, one of the poorest nations on earth, I found average people terrified that their government has no recourse in the global economic downturn. As deglobalization has gathered pace, Malawi has found it harder and harder to export tea, tobacco, and coffee, its major commodities and earners of hard currency. Yet, at the same time, the price of Malawi’s major imports has shot up, due to trade barriers and food scarcity. Over the past year, the price of rice in Malawi has doubled. “Everyone is scared, looking forward to a hungry season,” one aid official who works with farmers told me.

This was not how globalization was supposed to work. During the heady days of integration, developed nations accompanied globalization with promises of increased aid, capped by pledges, at the 2005 summit of the G-8 industrialized nations, of some \$50 billion in aid

to Africa designed to help integrate the continent into the world economy. “It is the vision of the World Bank Group to contribute to an inclusive and sustainable globalization,” World Bank president Robert Zoellick said in a speech in 2007. Alas, no. Instead of integration lifting all boats, deglobalization is falling hardest on the poor, which had adapted most radically to the promises of globalization to begin with.

EVEN IF THEY survive the economic shock, many poor countries’ governments will not survive the political fallout of deglobalization. In places like Africa, or poorer parts of Latin America and Asia, economic slowdowns spark rioting and other types of unrest more quickly than they would in wealthier societies. In Haiti, for example, economic contraction in 2008, combined with a rise in food prices, led to violent riots across the country that toppled the prime minister. Overall, food price increases last year sparked violent unrest in 30 countries. On the sidelines of the recent meeting of G-8 ministers of agriculture, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack told the *Financial Times* that, unless wealthy nations quickly address food output and new barriers to food exports, the world will face even greater turmoil. Laid-off migrants, meanwhile, could come home jobless and angry. In Haiti, Anne Hastings, head of a large micro-credit institution in the country, told *The Washington Post* that the economic crisis and its effects could spark more violence in the country. “Everyone thinks we’re going to explode any day now,” she said. In poor, frontline terrorist battlegrounds like Pakistan and Yemen, both of which depend on remittances from migrant laborers working in the Persian Gulf, deglobalization could send home thousands of newly unemployed young men, offering a ready stream of recruits to Islamist organizations, which are well-known in those countries for providing food, health care, and other social welfare. Worried, the World Bank recently proposed a \$500 million loan to Pakistan to help keep it relatively stable.

Unfortunately, the rich world may not be able or willing to expend the resources to stabilize some of the poor countries hardest hit by deglobalization, leaving the changes to become permanent. Many trade experts believe the Doha Round of negotiations can never

be revived, striking a major blow to the promise that rich nations would slash barriers to benefit the poor. In addition, because the Doha Round was supposed to finally liberalize trade in agriculture, its failure will fall hardest on poor farmers in places like Africa that had hoped to be exporting to the West. As WTO head Pascal Lamy admitted back in 2006, in a report to the organization’s leadership, “It is now obvious that the cost of failure [of the Doha Round], and the missed opportunity to rebalance the trading system, would hurt developing countries more than others.”

Worse, even after the global financial crises eases, rich countries are unlikely to throw their borders open to migration again, since doing so has become so unpopular in many wealthy nations. In the most recent elections for the European Parliament, far-right, anti-immigrant parties delivered surprisingly strong showings in nations from Britain to Hungary; an attempt by a British company to hire workers from Portugal and other European nations sparked protests in the United Kingdom. As Senator Charles Grassley summed up the sentiment, “There is no need for companies to hire foreign workers ... when there are plenty of qualified Americans looking for jobs.”

Yet the poor cannot turn on a dime. Once they’ve liberalized their agricultural sectors, handing the market over to private traders, it proves very difficult for the government to go back to subsidies. Malawi has enjoyed some success with the strategy, but few of its neighbors have been able to copy it. And, once they have created an export pipeline of migrant workers, the domestic job market adapts, leaving no work for those migrants when they come home. When I visited the Philippines, prominent academic Federico Macaranas, who runs a

think tank at one of the leading business schools, told me that, without emigration sopping up pools of workers, the country’s unemployment rate would skyrocket.

Developing nations also can’t just wait out this era of deglobalization, which will

be with us for a long time. As history shows, barriers erected don’t come down quickly. It took more than ten years to produce NAFTA, and the project of integrating Europe lasted decades before the EU’s currency union was created. And, while they wait, countries like Singapore have only one direction to go—back to the swamp, or worse. ♦

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Books & the Arts

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS SELVES

NATURALLY ENOUGH, the New Wave is rolling back. The tide of new French talent that flooded world screens just before and after 1960—bringing Godard, Truffaut, Rohmer, Rivette, Resnais, and Chabrol, among others—has been ebbing for some time. Movingly aware of this, Agnès Varda, one of the earliest if not one of the most eminent members of the group, has looked back at her life in a film.

The Beaches of Agnès is autobiography as festival. It begins on a beach in Belgium that was important to her as a child, and it visits other beaches that have mattered in her life. She says, “If you opened people up, you would find landscapes. If you opened me up, you would find beaches.” But, with the fizz and fervor that have marked most of her pictures, she takes us to many other places where she has lived and worked, and we meet many of the people, some of them famous, who have figured in her career. Little that she includes, except clips of past films, is rendered exactly as is: most of it is decked with Varda touches. (Instances: a suite of large mirrors on the first beach that reflect her and her helpers; a beach created with truckloads of sand in a narrow Paris street just because she had imagined a beach there.) Some of her diversions can get too cute, like a music-hall number in which she performs, but the picture ripples along very pleasantly, with energy and affection on the surface, and with inevitable bitter elixir just below.

She was born in Brussels in 1928. (Her hair in the present-day shots is dark, yet in some of the other shots done recently it is gray.) In the war years her family moved to the southern coast of France, and to the beaches there. After schooling, when she thought it was time to stop being a virgin, she climbed aboard a Corsican fishing boat with a crew of three and solved the prob-

lem. Rather quickly it became clear that she was destined for some kind of pictorial work, because, as she moved through the world, she saw every place in terms of pictures of the place. She studied photography and spent ten years as stills photographer for the renowned Jean Vilar and his Théâtre National Populaire. (Some stunning photos here.) Then she became interested in cinema.

Why? The reason is unexpected. For words, she says. Motion pictures brought her much more than words, of course; but primarily it was the addition of language, rather than motion, that drew her to cinema. Oddly, this priority is not supported in the Varda films that I remember, or the clips of them here, where there are always ideas of some kind but where the purpose is the presentation itself. *Beaches* is spangled with other clips, too, with snippets and flashes of past enterprises—we glimpse the earliest film appearances of Philippe Noiret, Michel Piccoli, Delphine Seyrig, Gérard Depardieu—usually with shards of apt dialogue but with even more striking visuals.

Wound through most of her story is her marriage—to the late Jacques Demy, himself a gifted director (*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*). Varda made a film about him

after his death in 1990, and, as I remember, it has some resemblance to *Beaches*: a director’s life presented through clips of past films along with past events. But it did not have the champagne effect of *Beaches*. Varda’s effervescence has long been celebrated, yet here, too, there are contradictions in her career. Her very first feature to be seen in the United States, *Cleo from 5 to 7*, is marked with her visual idiosyncrasies, though it deals with the two hours before a young woman gets the results of a biopsy. And the intensely

serious *Vagabond* (1985), the drama of a young woman struggling to shuck society’s protocols who is destroyed by that society even as she withdraws, has no touch of Varda’s usual stylistic vivacity but is her most memorable film.

Though she can dazzle in both powers of the camera, the still photograph and the film, her special use here of film as retrospect is even more telling. The camera always preserves time, but film preserves the phenomenon of being itself, and an account of this preservation is almost inescapably moving. (Think of Fellini’s *Intervista*, which I sometimes do.) It is quite possible that Varda will be as happily remembered for this fantasia about her career as for what she did in it.

ANOTHER autobiographical film about a film-maker, but vastly different. Richard P. Rogers was an American documentary maker and, at Harvard, a film teacher. His autobiography was assembled after his death. *The Windmill Movie* refers to a windmill that actually stood in the garden of his family home in the Hamptons, acquired by his mother as a kind of memorial of her father. That family link and the insistence on “movie” in the title, a rather assertive statement of humility, tinge the whole picture.

Rogers, who died in 2001 at age fifty-seven, had been nibbling all through



his life at an autobiography on film. He made eighteen features but found time at successive ages to shoot, and to have shot, vignettes of himself doing something or other or nothing, speaking the while about purposes and questions and devilments and pleasures in his life. We meet most of the people who were lastingly important to him—father, mother, wife (Susan Meiselas, a noted photographer, who produced this film), mistress. His mother is especially vivid. We sample much of the Hamptons life that Rogers both needed and skirted. He seems glad to have had entry into that life and also doesn't mind avoiding it when he can.

This film was assembled and fulfilled by Alexander Olch, who had been a student of Rogers at Harvard. Linkages, talking-head shots, visual data, atmospheric lifts are all well handled by Olch. There is even a brief appearance by one of the best American playwrights, Wallace Shawn, who was a Rogers friend. The result is a portrait of an individual who is very much himself yet familiar—intelligent, self-mocking, self-concerned, set and upset in his relationships, and worried (in his own scale) by mankind's perennial question. Phrased grandly or simply, it is the basic question of existence: what's it all about?

The temporal basis of *The Windmill Movie* enhances it. The picture exists in four time planes. Usually there are three planes: when the action was done, when the maker dealt with what was done, and when the viewer sees it. Here is an added dimension: the person whose wonders and worries are on screen no longer exists, so there is a fourth limitless plane of time for him. Nothing could by now be more common than seeing deceased people on screen, either acting or as themselves. But this picture is devoted to the puzzles of a man who is dealing with these matters before our eyes and who is now free of them. In a wry way, it reminds us that at least one thing about us will survive: our questions.

The film would have been somewhat more enlightening if Olch had included a few clips from Rogers's work, which would have added yet another time plane. Still, *The Windmill Movie* underscores a huge and faintly terrifying fact: all human lives, potentially at least, have been extended indefinitely by film.

THE PEOPLE in the film world who get little of the gratitude they deserve are those who find the pictures in the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival. The twentieth such festival is now here, with thirty-two films—

fiction and documentaries—from seventeen countries, and the two that I have so far seen, both of them fiction, prove that the level of the work is still high. The judges who find the pictures in these annual festivals have exceptional taste. "A double blessing is a double grace," says Shakespeare. Human Rights Watch is not only doing the work that is manifest in its name: it is increasing world awareness of good films.

Here are my two samplings. *Snow* by Aida Begić is from Bosnia and is about people whose troubles were once in the spotlight and who now live in the aftermath of those troubles after the spotlight has moved. It is 1997. In this home in a Bosnian village live the women of a family bereft of their men, all of whom were killed by Serbs. Begić begins by evoking the atmosphere of the home, this eastern European home, thickly textured with warmth and tacit unity and defense against the world outside. Then the women are approached by a man who represents a large corporation that wants to buy their house, and other houses in the village, for the construction of a business enterprise (thus destroying their village by non-military methods). This man is a Serb, who admits that he was in the Serbian army, as was a colleague who soon joins them. So the war continues in a different lexicon.

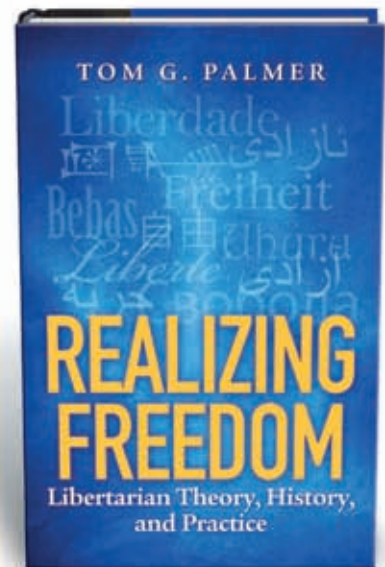
Kabuli Kid by Barmak Akram, set in Kabul, deals with a taxi driver and an infant abandoned in his taxi, and it has no iota of sentimentality. A young woman with a baby hails this man's taxi one day, gives directions, then suddenly gets out of the taxi, deliberately leaving the baby behind. We may expect a tale of soppy metamorphosis, as the wee one melts the driver's heart. What we get, however, is a cross-section of life in Kabul as the driver tries to find the mother or leave the child in a safe haven. Glimpses of local life and custom abound. (For instance, when the mother is preparing the baby for abandonment, she puts eye makeup on it.) Akram found means, in a tightly wrapped blanket, to explore a city and its culture, with honesty and insight.

As usual, the festival will travel with programs of differing lengths to many cities in the United States and Canada. For information either about dates or what will be available on DVD, the website is www.hrw.org/iff. The humane purpose of the festival is hardly secondary; but we might also remember that it brings us good films, foreign and domestic, that do not get commercial release because of commercial conditions. Thanks again to the festival judges. ♦

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Sean Wilentz

WHO LINCOLN WAS

And was not: the images and illusions of this momentous bicentennial year.

I.
THE PAST THREE generations of historians have agreed that Abraham Lincoln was probably the best president in American history and that Franklin Pierce was one of the worst. Pierce, a New Hampshire Democrat, gave political cover to fractious slaveholders and their violent supporters in the 1850s. His softness on the slavery issue encouraged the southern truculence that later led to secession and the formation of the Confederacy. Apart from their closeness in age—the bicentennial of Pierce's birth passed virtually unnoticed four and a half years ago—about the only things that he and Lincoln had in common were their preoccupation with politics and their success in reaching the White House.

When Pierce ran for president in 1852, Lincoln, naturally, campaigned against him. But the cause of the Whig party was extremely feeble in Illinois that year. (The Whigs, originally formed in opposition to Andrew Jackson, were a national coalition of pro-business conservatives, reformers who supported economic development, and moderate southern planters. Lincoln remained a staunch Whig loyalist until the party crumbled in 1854.) And so Lincoln limited himself to a long speech in Springfield—it took him two days to deliver it!—which he abridged and repeated in Peoria. The speech did nothing to affect the outcome of the election, in Illinois or in the country at large. But it deserves to be remembered in these days of Lincoln idolatry, because it can be disturbing reading to anyone inclined to worship Father Abraham.

Defending the Whig candidate, General Winfield Scott, from slurs by Senator Stephen A. Douglas, Lincoln attacked Pierce not as a slaveholders' tool, but as a Yankee who had flattered anti-slavery northerners. Lincoln specifically charged that Pierce had expressed a "loathing" for the Fugitive Slave Law, which Congress had passed two years earlier to help masters and their hirelings retrieve runaway slaves who had fled to the North. This was the very law that had provoked an outraged Harriet Beecher Stowe to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and portray the slave Eliza making her daring escape to freedom across the Ohio River. Lincoln

defended the law as perfectly constitutional, and charged that Pierce had taken a stance that was all too friendly to the real-life Elizas, and too dismissive of the rights of slaveholders and slave hunters. He did so, Lincoln charged, in an effort to pick up votes outside the Democrats' base in the deep South. Lincoln even claimed that the northerner Pierce's "efficacy" at winning anti-slavery votes "was the very thing that secured his nomination."

There was more. Lincoln said that Pierce could win only by positioning himself as a peculiar kind of political progeny, born of a mating of northern conservative Democrats and anti-slavery free-soilers, "the latter predominating in the offspring." The positioning was particularly important in carrying the swing state of New York, where conservative Democrats, the so-called Hunker Democrats, had long been battling the anti-slavery Barnburners. According to Lincoln's most optimistic projections, Scott might just peel off enough New York Barnburner votes to win the presidency. Pierce's contrived politics put Lincoln in mind of a sailor's sea chantey that had appeared in a book by the British writer Frederick Marryat: "Sally is a bright Mullater, / Oh Sally Brown— / Pretty gal, but can't get at her, / O Sally Brown." Were Pierce actually elected, Lincoln joked, "he will, politically speaking, not only be a mulatto; but he will be a good deal darker one than Sally Brown."

My point in re-telling this story is not to try, yet again, to debunk Lincoln's reputation for probity and sagacity, and for perfect enlightenment on racial issues. The defamatory image of Lincoln as a conventional white racist, whose chief cause was self-aggrandizement, is even more absurd than the awe-struck hagiographies that have become ubiquitous in this anniversary year. My point is simpler and larger. It is that Abraham Lincoln was, first and foremost, a politician.

LINCOLN HATED SLAVERY, and had said so long before 1852. But he also had to admit that the Fugitive Slave Law was technically and constitutionally correct. In the congressional deal known as the Compromise of 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law was just part of the price the southern slaveholders exacted

for sectional comity, and both major parties formally endorsed it in 1852. Lincoln knew that by assailing Pierce, a northern man with southern principles, as a con- niver willing to play politics with the Fugitive Slave Law, he would sow doubts among northern conservatives, Whig and Democratic, whose votes the Whigs badly needed. Lightly infused with off-hand racist humor, Lincoln's speech was hardly his finest political hour—but it was just that, a political speech. It was not, as some current writers imagine Lincoln's every utterance was, a foray into moral philosophy or social theory. Nor did his brief quotation from Marryat's book have much at all to do with race or sex, the major preoccupations of so much of today's academic scholarship; and it certainly had nothing to do with Lincoln's love of English literature. It had to do with ridiculing Pierce as what we would call a flip-flopper, someone who would say anything to win the election.

In 1854, when Lincoln began shifting his loyalties to the anti-slavery Republican Party, the tone as well as the substance of his speeches became grander, and the casual racism receded. Lincoln evolved and grew as the Republican Party and anti-slavery public opinion in the North grew. But it is important to understand that those later pronouncements of Lincoln's were no less political than his earlier ones, no less geared to achieving a particular political goal or set of political goals. Given the enlarged stakes of the sectional crisis and then the Civil War, Lincoln's goals were actually more political than ever. He was a shrewd and calculating creature of politics; and he achieved historical greatness in his later years because of, and not despite, his political skills. It was the only way that anyone could have completed the momentous tasks that history, as well as his personal ambition, had handed to him. It was the only way he knew how to do *anything* of public importance, and the only way he cared to know.

These points are not new. One of the great Lincoln scholars of our time, David Herbert Donald (whose recent death is a great loss to historians and their readers), made some of them in an essay published more than fifty years ago, "A. Lincoln, Politician." Yet many of Lincoln's latter-

day admirers, the most effusive as well as the begrudging, prefer a fantasy Lincoln who experienced some sort of individual awakening or mystical conversion, who somehow transcended politics for a realm more pure.

LINCOLN HAS never lacked for critics, ranging from pro-Confederates on the Right to black nationalists on the Left. Yet he has inspired far more approval and even adoration than animosity among historians—including one admiring line of argument that can accommodate even his unsavory attack on Pierce in 1852. That interpretation runs roughly as follows. For most of his adult life, Lincoln was an enormously ambitious and partisan Whig Party organizer and officeholder who, after a single frustrating term in Congress, retired from politics in 1849 to become a highly successful lawyer in Springfield. Then the enactment of the Kansas-Nebraska Act five years later stirred his moral aversion to slavery and re-awakened his political aspirations. Thereafter—his enormous human sympathy aroused, his conscience pricked by eloquent radicals such as Frederick Douglass, and his hand forced by ordinary slaves who flocked to Union lines during the Civil War—Lincoln the hack politician gradually transformed into a philosopher-statesman and a literary genius.

This account appears in many different forms. It is consistent with—or can be made to be consistent with—a particular view of American political history that emerged out of the radicalism of the 1960s and is widely held today. On this view, elected officials, even the most worthy, are at best cautious and unreliable figures who must be forced by unruly events—and by outsiders—into making major reforms. Thus Martin Luther King Jr. and the civil rights movement had to compel the southern wheeler-dealer Lyndon B. Johnson to support civil rights and voting rights for blacks. Thus John L. Lewis and the left-wing Congress of Industrial Organizations had to push a reluctant Franklin Delano Roosevelt into making and then enlarging the New Deal. And thus Frederick Douglass and the runaway slaves, not Abraham Lincoln, deserve the real credit for the Emancipation Proclamation.

Without question, what Lincoln called “public sentiment” is and always has been a key battleground; and insofar as agitators such as the abolitionists affect that sentiment, they have a crucial role to play in democratic politics (as Lincoln also recognized). But it is one thing to acknowledge the effects of outsiders and

radicals and quite another to vaunt their supposed purity in order to denigrate mainstream politics and politicians. The implication of this anti-political or meta-political narrative is that the outsiders are the truly admirable figures, whereas presidents are merely the outsiders’ lesser, reluctant instruments. Anyone who points out the obvious fact that, without a politically supple, energetic, and de-

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voted president, change will never come, runs the risk of being branded an elitist or worse. (Hillary Clinton discovered as much during last year’s presidential primaries, when she spoke admiringly about how Johnson pushed through the Civil Rights Act of 1964.) Lincoln may be the only one of these presidents who, having seen the light, went on to earn a kind of secular sainthood; but his

redemption from grubby politics and self-interested prudence had to precede his martyrdom and canonization. That redemption came as a result of the dramatic resistance of the lowly slaves, and of the words and the actions of uncompromising abolitionists.

The “bottom up” populism of this line of argument got its start in the ideal of participatory democracy forty years ago, but its incomprehension and belittlement of politics and politicians originated much earlier. Historians, like most intellectuals, have long felt uncomfortable with scheming, self-aggrandizing political professionals, preferring idealists whom they imagine were unblemished by expedience and compromise. One of the exceptions among the historians, Richard N. Current, wrote with a touch of embarrassment in 1958 that, for Americans, “politics generally means ‘dirty’ politics, whether the adjective is used or not.”

The hostility of some Americans toward partisan competition and political government is as old as the republic, but it gained special force among writers and publicists linked to the patrician, politically moderate, good-government Mugwumps of the late nineteenth century. Today’s historians who uphold the radical legacies of the 1960s consider themselves anything but patrician and moderate—their sympathies lie, of course, with the poor and excluded, not with the virtuous, educated, genteel classes whom the Mugwumps championed. But the recent contempt for conventional party politicians shows that Mugwumpery has evolved, paradoxically, into a set of propositions and assumptions congenial to the contemporary American academic Left.

Like the Mugwumps, many present-day American historians assume that political calculation, opportunism, careerism, and duplicity negate idealism and political integrity. Like the Mugwumps, they charge that the similarities between the corrupt major political parties overwhelm their differences. Like the Mugwumps, they equate purposefulness with political purity. Consequently, their writings slight how all great American leaders, including many of the outsiders they idealize, have relied on calculation, opportunism, and all the other democratic political arts in order to advance their loftiest and most controversial goals. And they slight how the achievement of America’s greatest advances, including the abolition of slavery, would have been impossible without the strenuous efforts of the calculators and the opportunists in the leadership of American politics.

At its most straightforward, caustic, and predictable—as in the balefully influential works of Howard Zinn, who has described Lincoln as at best “a kind man” who had to be “pushed by the anti-slavery movement” into emancipation—this post-1960s populist history writing is just as skewed as the tendentious “great white male” historiography that it has supposedly discredited. Other populist historians are more generous, allowing Lincoln—and, occasionally, Franklin Roosevelt—to escape relatively unscathed, and even ennobled. But if it is history that we really care about, then we must recognize that the populist storyline of Lincoln’s redemption and transfiguration, like the other versions, makes a hash of his actual life and times.

Lincoln may have had his own purposes, like the Almighty, but those purposes always included gaining or maintaining political advantage, often enough by cagey and unexhilarating means. Although he was often unsuccessful, his political cunning was his strength, and not a corrupting weakness. Pure-hearted radicals did not manipulate him into nobility as much as he manipulated them to suit his own political aims—which, as president, were to save the Union and insure that freedom, and not slavery, would prevail in the struggle of the house divided. Unless we understand this, none of Lincoln’s philosophizing, and none of his spare, arresting, and moving rhetoric, makes any sense.

THE ANNOUNCEMENTS in last year’s publishers’ catalogues that a flood of new books would accompany Lincoln’s bicentennial augured an opportunity to evaluate the state of Lincoln scholarship, in part by pointing to the writings of those historians, past and present, who insist on evaluating Lincoln seriously as a political creature. (I confess that I have contributed my own bits to the bicentennial torrent.) The difficulty is that an entirely new fashion in the historiography of Lincoln seems to have arisen, which further diminishes the importance of party politics and government in his career. This new fashion—which is really a retrieval and an expansion of older lines of interpretation—takes for granted that Lincoln rose to a surpassing greatness. In one way or another, the fashion locates Lincoln’s chief distinction in his literary sophistication and his empathetic powers, making only passing glances at his political astuteness. Indeed, in some quarters, Lincoln’s political successes, before and during his presidency, now seem to have come almost entirely from his writing

and his oratory, in what might be called a literary determinist interpretation of history. Lincoln’s apotheosis remains undisturbed; the difference is that he is now an archangel of belles lettres—or, as Jacques Barzun described him fifty years ago, a man with a hidden hurt who became an “artist-saint.” Therein, supposedly, lay the basis, or at least one important basis, for his political greatness.

The current fascination with Lincoln as a writer originated with Garry Wills’s *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, which was published to a rapturous reception in 1993. Amid erudite and illuminating discussions of classical oratory, American sermonizing, and New England Transcendentalist philosophy, Wills described Lincoln’s address, in November 1863, as a turning point in the Civil War and, thus, in American history. By proclaiming that the Union was fighting to save a government dedicated from its inception to the idea that all men were created equal, Wills said, Lincoln turned Jefferson’s egalitarian Declaration of Independence into the nation’s foundational text, on which the Constitution was later built. Yet Lincoln also cunningly expanded the slaveholder Jefferson’s conception of equality by embracing blacks, slave and free, and promising that the war would finally bring “a new birth of freedom.” In a span of fewer than three hundred brilliant words—and in a speech that many, at the time, deemed ordinary, even perfunctory—Lincoln supposedly revolutionized the nation’s highest ideals.

Wills’s account, like numerous later books that dissect one or another of Lincoln better-known orations, overdramatizes the speech’s importance. As Wills himself observes, Lincoln had been publicly testing the hard realities of slavery against the Declaration’s premises for nearly a decade before he spoke at Gettysburg. And Lincoln was neither alone in his beliefs nor one bit ahead of his time. As early as the debates over the Missouri Compromise in 1819 and 1820, anti-slavery Jeffersonian congressmen pointed to the Declaration—“an authority admitted in all parts of the Union [as] a definition of the basis of republican government,” one member of the House described it—and asserted that it was fundamentally at odds with what another congressman called “the intolerable evil and crying enormity of slavery.” (Southern congressmen replied that the Declaration “is not part of the Constitution or any other book,” and that Jefferson, although “venerable,” had been wrong to malign slavery in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*—charges

that anticipated by forty years almost identical anti-Jeffersonian claims made by pro-slavery secessionists.)

To be sure, even if the ideas contained in the Gettysburg Address were widely held, “they never,” as Richard Current observed thirty-five years before Wills, “had been put so well.” Like Jefferson before him, Current wrote, Lincoln, “for his own time and for all time, crystallized in superb language the ideals and aspirations of millions of men and women.” Wills’s re-reading of the address, and enrichment of its intellectual context, has its merits; but since Wills is more interested in doctrine and culture than in politics, his book elides the basic fact that the speech had no political purpose greater than commemorating the dead and leaving a good impression, and no immediately discernible political effect whatsoever. Although pro-administration newspapers such as the *Springfield Republican* in Massachusetts pronounced it “a perfect gem,” the Democratic press echoed the *Chicago Times*’s ridicule of Lincoln’s shamefully “silly, flat, and dishwatery utterances.”

Similarly, the more prominent recent studies of Lincoln’s words and ideas are almost completely unconcerned with politics beyond banal and often ill-informed rehearsals of Lincoln’s opinions on race, slavery, colonization, and democracy. Having already been mythologized, Lincoln is in danger of being aestheticized: now he belongs to the English department. Combined with an abiding post-1960s preference for radicals over politicians, this trend renders Lincoln as the supreme giant of American politics because he was, as Barzun observed, “a born writer” with “the quiet intent of a conscious artist,” and because his compassion, as well as the force of circumstances, led him to heed the wisdom of the militants, to champion the downtrodden, and finally, as president, to transcend politics as usual.

Modern democratic politics are supposed to be immune to the kind of intense cult of personality common in authoritarian regimes, with their caudillos, patriot kings, and maximum leaders. James Madison and the framers of the Constitution designed a federal government to hinder the emergence of such an individual. But the United States—or, at least, historical writing about the United States—is not immune. We are given a Lincoln whose surviving everyday possessions and scraps—including, according to one recent newspaper report, his pocket watch—are accorded the attention and invested with the properties

otherwise associated with sacred relics. The historical Lincoln disappears and a wishful fantasy takes his place, symbolizing a politics that has been cleansed and redeemed, which is to say a politics that is unreal—a politics constructed out of words, just words.

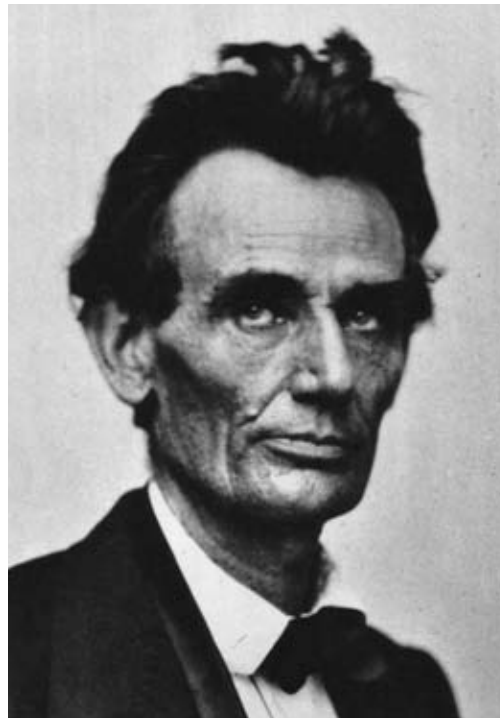
II.

A FEW BOOKS have appeared during this bicentennial that do take his politics and his political career very seriously. Harold Holzer, a prolific writer on Lincoln and the co-chairman of the Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, admires Lincoln enormously, but also understands that he was a political creature. His book is the closest study ever undertaken of the critical four months between Lincoln's election as president and his inauguration on March 4, 1861. It aims to correct what Holzer considers the unjust view—formulated by the young Henry Adams at the time, and supported by later scholars—that Lincoln acted unsteadily in the face of the growing emergency of secession, resorting to platitudes and trivialities in his public statements, and otherwise giving an impression of weakness and indecisiveness.

For many pro-Lincoln historians, the transition months of 1860–1861 offer an important baseline for judging his later growth in office—but Holzer, who does not deny that Lincoln grew, insists that Lincoln was a brilliant leader even before the inauguration. If Lincoln appeared to be fumbling, according to Holzer, he intended as much, in order to cloak the momentous decisions that he was making about his administration's policies and personnel. On his long circuitous train journey from Springfield to Washington, Lincoln would show his homely, newly whiskered face to the crowds and say a few innocuous words, so as to connect personally with the voters who had elected him. All the while, behind the scenes, he completed the delicate task of selecting his cabinet while writing the inaugural address that would make his views about the mounting crisis perfectly clear to all. What Adams had criticized as Lincoln's "masterly inactivity" was actually, Holzer writes, the "confident silence" of a master of maneuver.

Holzer rescues Lincoln from some familiar misconceptions, above all the claim that, as of 1861, he cared completely about saving the Union and not at all about slavery. Although cautious

not to say so publicly lest he worsen the situation, Lincoln vigorously opposed all congressional efforts to thwart secession by reaching some sort of deal that would allow slavery to expand into the western territories. "Let there be no compromise on the question of *extending* slavery," he instructed his fellow Illinois Republican, Senator Lyman Trumbull. "If there be, all our labor is lost, and, ere long, must be done again." Given that allowing slavery's extension was the nub of the issue as far as the southern secessionists were concerned, and given that Lincoln himself had long described slavery's restriction as the first step toward putting the institution, as he put it, "in the course of ultimate extinction," this



1860

was, as Holzer recognizes, an unprecedented "show of power and influence" by a president-elect. Secession was evil, Lincoln believed—but he was not prepared to concede his party's core anti-slavery conviction, or turn it into a bargaining chip, in order to salvage the Union.

Holzer, to be sure, is not the only historian who has elucidated these matters. Kenneth M. Stampp's *And The War Came*, which was published in 1950 (and which Holzer curiously does not cite), offers a similar view of Lincoln, as does Russell McClintock's fine study *Lincoln and the Decision for War*, which appeared in 2008. And some of Holzer's more original revisionist arguments are unpersuasive. Holzer tries, for example, to refute

the conventional view that Lincoln minimized the dangers of secession because he overestimated the extent of southern Unionism. Yet Lincoln failed to appreciate how southern Unionism was far more conditional than its northern counterpart, open to the possibility of secession (which became all too evident in the wake of the showdown over Fort Sumter). Lincoln had a shrewd understanding of northern politics, but he knew little of the South outside of his native Kentucky—and hence he failed to understand the complexities and limits of southern Unionism in 1860 and 1861, with terrible results.

Holzer's intense admiration of Lincoln sometimes leads him to make too much of a good thing. In accord with the argument presented by Doris Kearns Goodwin's recent book describing Lincoln's cabinet as a "team of rivals"—an easily exaggerated view cited so often during the Obama transition that it became one of the platitudes of our day—Holzer is persuaded of the brilliance of Lincoln's selections. Holzer accurately presents Lincoln the cabinet-maker as a hard-nosed politician, who made good on promises extended during the fight for the Republican nomination (although the book could have said more on this), and who sought to placate every element of his faction-ridden party. Yet Lincoln's approach to the task was nothing new. Moreover, the cabinet that he picked was a dysfunctional collection of schemers far more than it was a team of any kind.

The practice of a president-elect choosing his chief rival within his party as secretary of state dated back, as James Oakes has pointed out, to John Quincy Adams, who selected Henry Clay in 1825 (and thereby provoked charges that the two had made a backroom deal). During the presidencies of Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, and James Buchanan in the 1850s, the practice practically became a ritual, and Lincoln followed suit by naming William H. Seward in 1861—even though doing so provided no assurance of a successful presidency. (Past experience might even have boded the exact opposite.) Lincoln's other cabinet choices included Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, who had helped Lincoln mightily at the Republican nominating convention—and who left his post as secretary of war in January 1862 under a heavy cloud of corruption allegations. (Cameron's replacement, the redoubtable Edwin Stanton, did a brilliant job, but as a former Democrat he had been no rival of any

kind to Lincoln or any of his fellow cabinet secretaries. And Lincoln's vacillation over his initial selection of Cameron, long suspected of speculation, was hardly a profile in steadfast decisiveness.)

Secretary of State Seward skipped many cabinet meetings and took advantage of his private access to Lincoln, which infuriated the others. Treasury Secretary Salmon Chase, one of those most offended, also took to skipping meetings and tried, unsuccessfully, to wrest the nomination away from Lincoln in 1864, before he resigned. (When Roger Taney, chief justice of the Supreme Court and author of the notorious *Dred Scott* decision, died later that year, Lincoln eventually named Chase as his successor, choosing to put the politically maladroit Chase's skill and ambition to work for the country.) Attorney General Edward Bates, who also resigned in 1864, complained bitterly that the president misused his cabinet and never relied on its collective wisdom. Lincoln may not have been quite as hapless in designing his cabinet as the prevailing accounts of his transition to office suggest, but his decisions hardly proved the brilliant political breakthrough that Holzer describes as the work of a "master political puppeteer." All his political acumen did not spare Lincoln from making cabinet selections that were less than inspired, and in some cases disastrous.

THE TWO most prominent new biographies of Lincoln, like Holzer's book, offer serious accounts of Lincoln's political career, but they have their own peculiarities. Michael Burlingame, who has written or edited a dozen books on Lincoln, gained considerable notice in the world of Lincoln scholarship a few years ago with a study, heavily indebted to Jungian psychology, that purported to describe and to analyze Lincoln's inner life. It was not the first time that a biographer or a historian has put Lincoln on the couch, if only to puzzle through Lincoln's famous chronic bouts of severe depression and to speculate about what some have seen as his burdensome marriage to an unstable woman. But Burlingame is deeply immersed in the sources on Lincoln, primary and secondary, so his judgments carried far more authority than the usual jerry-built psycho-histories.

Now Burlingame offers a massive two-volume life study so copiously documented that he and his publisher have decided to make the full footnotes available only on the Internet (where they can be updated as any new documentation or relevant secondary literature becomes

available). Burlingame reliably and astutely covers Lincoln's political career, and he grasps the subtleties of Lincoln's political machinations. Still, reactions to this vast book will depend on how useful one thinks Jungian archetypes are in evaluating long-departed political leaders. To his credit, Burlingame refrains from heavy theorizing; but his psychological method is unmistakable, and it leads him to make some far-fetched assertions on the basis of scanty evidence. Is it likely, or even possible, that Lincoln's traumatic childhood in a dirt-poor family—"I used to be a slave," he recalled as an adult—accounted for his later hatred of slavery? The claim did make me stop and think, but then I wondered whether older meanings of the word "slave" as any kind of coerced dependence or obedience had played tricks on Burlingame's imagination.

If Burlingame's devotion to deep psychological analysis is itself a bit slavish, the documentation that he provides in his book is sometimes unsettling. Most historians would think twice about relying as much as he does on second- and even third-hand testimony, often published decades after the events described. It is as if Burlingame has so steeped himself in Lincolniana that he thinks he can intuit which highly questionable sources are actually truthful—a kind of historical clairvoyance that does not inspire confidence. On other matters—his insistent demonization of Mary Todd Lincoln; his contention that Stephen A. Douglas, a heavy drinker, was practically falling down drunk during his famous debates with Lincoln—Burlingame is labored and unpersuasive.

Otherwise Burlingame's book fully accords with what might be called the standard "two Lincolns" approach—the line of argument that posits not simply that Lincoln's anti-slavery political convictions hardened over time, but also that Lincoln experienced a sharp and complete transformation in the deepest recesses of his soul. Burlingame naturally presents the shift in psychological terms, as a painful but productive mid-life crisis, in which Lincoln laid aside evanescent ambitions and constraining loyalties, concentrated on the weightier aspects of life, curbed his ego, and become a fully individuated man. It is certainly plausible that Lincoln endured such a psychological trial. But in Burlingame's account, a common rite of passage approximates the grandiose mythological sequence in which the hero must pass through some sort of clarifying ordeal before he can be reborn as truly heroic.

So heroic, in fact, is Burlingame's Lincoln that he becomes quasi-sacred—and maybe not so quasi. "Lincoln's personality was the North's secret weapon in the Civil War," Burlingame remarks. His attainment of "a level of consciousness unrivaled in the history of American public life" made possible the Union's victory. Indeed, Lincoln was not simply a startling exception among petty politicians, with their clamorous egos. He also rose above the limitations of mere humankind. "Lincoln achieved a kind of balance and wholeness," Burlingame writes, "that led one psychologist to remark that he had 'more psychological honesty' than anyone since Christ." Burlingame finds the comparison apt, if one regards the Christian messiah "as a psychological paradigm."

There is no way to prove or disprove such an assertion: it is, about Lincoln as about Jesus, a matter of faith. Burlingame's final evaluation takes us back beyond the Lincoln Memorial, beyond the populist hero-worship of Carl Sandburg, to a level of unreality and hagiography not seen since the traumatized aftermath of Lincoln's Good Friday murder, when an outpouring from grieving ministers, editorialists, politicians, and ordinary citizens affirmed that, as the president's young personal secretary, John Hay, remarked a few months later, "Lincoln, with all his foibles, is the greatest character since Christ."

RONALD C. WHITE JR.'s biography of Lincoln is another story of an evolving glorious hero who also was plagued by doubt, including intense self-doubt. White sometimes gives in to the urge to supply his readers with too much information. But his book is much less detailed, less grandiose, and more vivid than Burlingame's; and, like Burlingame, White skillfully evaluates most of Lincoln's political maneuvering. Still, with all of its strengths, *A. Lincoln* does not supersede the best modern one-volume biography, David Herbert Donald's *Lincoln*, which was published in 1995 (and is especially strong on Lincoln's political career).

Donald's book is flawed by its insistence on seeing Lincoln as a passive man, based partly on a misreading of Lincoln's own reflections about his inability to control events. White's book, by comparison, is oddly superficial and circumspect on various issues, large and small, laying out the basic facts but leaving it up to the reader to supply answers. What explains Lincoln's repeated plunges into what looks today like suicidal clinical depression? Why did the anti-slavery

politician—who claimed he had detested the institution since his youth—become such close friends with the Kentucky slaveholder Joshua Speed, or take another Kentucky slaveholder, Henry Clay, as his political idol? White's book discusses such perplexing, sometimes delicate matters, but leaves them unresolved.

Instead, White is chiefly interested in examining Lincoln's words and rhetoric, about which he is highly informative. White has already written two important shorter books on Lincoln's writing, completed long before the current surge of interest in Lincoln among literary scholars. (He also builds on *Lincoln's Sword*, a fine study of Lincoln's rhetoric by the historian Douglas L. Wilson, which was published in 2006.) If Burlingame's biography explores Lincoln's inner emotional life, White's biography studies his inner intellectual life, as grounded in Lincoln's reading of Shakespeare, the Bible, Blackstone's *Commentaries*, and poets such as Burns and Byron. An endless self-improver—at one point he took on the task of teaching himself Euclidean geometry, the better to sharpen his own logic—Lincoln also got into the habit of composing personal memos of varying lengths, on which he would later draw in his public pronouncements. The notes form, according to White, a kind of running journal, which offers essential clues about not simply what Lincoln thought but also how he thought.

White's historical approach to Lincoln's reading, writing, and speaking greatly enhances the record of the man and his career. Known by his associates more for intellectual thoroughness than for quickness or brilliance, Lincoln would spend weeks, months, even years taking the measure of a particular issue, jotting down his musings, refining his opinions, and finally honing his prose and its rhetorical structure. The famous "House Divided" speech of 1858 is a case in point. Most Lincoln scholars, following the memoirs of Lincoln's law partner William Herndon, have believed that he composed the speech during the days before he delivered it. But White points to a lengthy memo written seven months earlier, in which Lincoln elaborated his belief (as he wrote in the memo) that "the government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free."

Understood this way, Lincoln's prose remains arresting, especially after 1854, and most especially in contrast to the prolix billows that passed for fine oratory at the time. (Like several of the other current books on Lincoln, White's makes much of Lincoln's improvements

to Seward's suggested peroration to the first inaugural address.) White's portrayal of Lincoln's deliberate approach to his reading and his writing usefully reinforces what historians and biographers have written about his deliberate nature in other realms of life, including politics.

White also sheds light on one of the perennial puzzles in Lincoln scholarship: the increasingly religious tone of Lincoln's speeches after 1862, culminating in his second inaugural address. Although not the first scholar to examine the connection, White shows how Lincoln's reflections on "divine attributes" outside human control or comprehension may have reflected the preaching of the Reverend Phineas Densmore Gurley of the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, where Lincoln sometimes attended services during his presidency. A student of the redoubtable Charles Hodge at the Princeton Theological Seminary, Gurley imparted a faith that joined, somewhat ambiguously, the spiritual fatalism of his own Old School Presbyterians and the free-will "effort" Calvinism of the evangelical New School. Gurley bundled the two in a mysterious description of man as a rational, accountable moral agent who was nevertheless governed by the tradi-

tional American Calvinists' unknowable, omnipotent Providence. "Man *proposes*; God *disposes*," Gurley explained; and that paradox of human agency and divine sovereignty was, he insisted, the best way to begin to understand what he called "the probable fruits and consequences" of the continuing Civil War.

Lincoln, an open skeptic in his youth who never actually joined a church, did not have to have become a believing Christian in order to kindle to these ideas. (In the second inaugural address, he seemed at pains not to identify himself as one of "the believers in a living God"; and the claims made by some historians that he had developed a personal Christian faith are based more on fancy than on evidence.) But Lincoln and his wife certainly did begin showing up for services more often after he became president, especially after the death of their young son, Willie, in 1862. And Gurley's sermons did offer lessons on human limitation and humility in the face of an inscrutable universe, with a quiet faith that the Union would finally prevail.

In sum, White shows that Lincoln was not, as some writers have portrayed him, a "redeemer president," the inventor of a national civil religion that he built out of



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his torments and the nation's, and that became symbolized by his lofty words and, finally, by his murder. He was, rather, a Victorian doubter (and self-doubter) who found some comfort—and perhaps ways to question and at least partially to comprehend the incomprehensible—in the preaching of a Presbyterian minister. He then borrowed some clerical language to express what he had found, as well as his continued uncertainties, from his beloved King James Bible, the book most widely read and studied by his countrymen.

III.

THE MUCH GRANDER claims about Lincoln's prose—the work of Barzun's artist-saint—rest on a very small body of writing. The historian Don E. Fehrenbacher assembled two lengthy volumes of Lincoln's speeches and writings for the Library of America in 1986, but the vast bulk of them consists of letters and minor speeches that are chiefly of historical and biographical interest, not examples of fine finished prose. Several of Lincoln's speeches in Illinois during the 1850s (including some of his remarks during his debates with Stephen A. Douglas in 1858) qualify as literature, as does the Cooper Institute address that effectively kicked off his campaign for the Republican nomination in 1860. Thereafter, there are the powerful first and second inaugurals, the Gettysburg Address, and some brief passages in the first and second annual messages to Congress. In his letters, public and private, as well as in his conversation, Lincoln displayed a talent for sly metaphor and figurative language, reflecting his love of *Aesop's Fables* as well as his westerner's wit. But that's about it. Apart from Jefferson, no American president has matched Lincoln's mastery of prose—but no other American author has enjoyed such a stellar reputation based on such a slender literary output.

As small as Lincoln's oeuvre was, though, an enormous literature exists, composed mainly by writers, including well-known novelists, poets, journalists, and public figures, whose main interests lay outside the writing of American history. *The Lincoln Anthology*, edited by Harold Holzer and described as “a special publication” of the Library of America, fills more than nine hundred pages with more than one hundred entries by “great writers” from 1860 to 2007. Yet even though Holzer's introduction says that his “highly diverse array” of contributors includes historians, the closest we get to enduring historical scholarship are Barzun's essay on Lincoln the

writer, some snippets from Shelby Foote and Garry Wills, and Edmund Wilson's cranky and controversial essay on Lincoln from *Patriotic Gore*. Carl Sandburg, by contrast, gets five separate entries, the most of any author. Richard Watson Gilder, Bram Stoker, Honoré Willson Morrow, Dale Carnegie, Rosemary Benét, Irving Stone, E. L. Doctorow, and (inevitably) Barack Obama all make the cut. But the distinguished historians James Ford Rhodes, Albert J. Beveridge, James G. Randall, Allan Nevins, Benjamin P. Thomas, Richard Hofstadter, Bruce Catton, David M. Potter, Kenneth M. Stampp, Benjamin Quarles, Richard N. Current, Don E. Fehrenbacher, John Hope Franklin, David Herbert Donald, and James M. McPherson do not.

One could conclude that Holzer and his editors at the Library of America do not consider historians “great writers,” although that would still leave unexplained the inclusion of Carnegie, Benét, and Stone, among others. But Holzer's own writings on Lincoln show great respect for other historians. The choices in *The Lincoln Anthology* seem driven, rather, by a desire to convey Lincoln's changing image among famous and influential, and formerly famous or influential, writers and political leaders—Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Winston Churchill, and Adlai Stevenson turn up, along with Barack Obama—in order to gauge Lincoln's shifting place in the broader national culture, and not among scholars.

No doubt novelists, poets, journalists, and politicians carry much more cultural cachet than historians do, especially in the upper echelons of American art and politics. (So do painters: Holzer allots space for an odd geophysical love poem to Lincoln—“the only voice worth hearing”—by Marsden Hartley, along with a plate of one of Hartley's oil portraits of the president in his stovepipe hat.) It is without question a treat to dip into what Mark Twain and Marianne Moore and James Agee had to say about Lincoln, and to see how impressions of Lincoln have changed over time. (*The Lincoln Anthology* can most profitably be read as a companion to Merrill D. Peterson's excellent historical study, *Lincoln in American Memory*, which appeared in 1995.)

Still, the selection seems skewed. Apart from a brief—and, in this context, refreshing—piece by H. L. Mencken on Lincoln as “the chief butt of American credulity and sentimentality,” Lincoln's devotees and occasional critics from the left are over-represented. The omission of Harry V. Jaffa, a follower of Leo Strauss and one of Lincoln's more provocative conserva-

tive admirers, is noticeable. Holzer does include Lerone Bennett Jr.'s polemical attack from the left on Lincoln as a white supremacist, which appeared in *Ebony* magazine in 1968, but it is odd that Holzer fails to mention that virtually the same points as Bennett's appeared in a celebration of Lincoln decades earlier by the white racist novelist Thomas Dixon, the author of *The Clansman* (which became the chief source for D. W. Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation*). The exclusion of Dixon is further evidence of the anthology's Yankee bias. There do not appear to be more than a half-dozen southern white writers represented, or as many as ten southerners of any color. Neither the ironic view of Lincoln and the Union cause voiced by southerners such as Robert Penn Warren, nor the neo-Confederate anti-Lincolnism associated with the likes of the adopted southerner M. E. Bradford, are given a hearing.

Finally, though, the exclusion, from a compilation of great writings about Lincoln, of those authors, the historians, who have actually known the most about the man and his times is stunning. It is also strangely fitting, as the practice of writing about Lincoln by non-historians continues, indeed is flourishing in this bicentennial year, inside as well as outside the academy. And it will come as no surprise that English professors are at the head of the line, given the recent trend for literary critics to write about any subject they please, and in a tone of serene authority.

FRED KAPLAN's study of Lincoln as a writer is one of the only books in the current flood to take account of Lincoln's marathon “mulatto” speech in 1852. (Burlingame devotes one long paragraph to the entire 1852 campaign, and dispatches the speech's attack on Pierce over the Fugitive Slave Act in a single sentence; Henry Louis Gates Jr. includes the speech in his collection of Lincoln's writings on slavery and race, and explains it well in a headnote.) Kaplan describes the political background and Lincoln's practical purposes. But he is chiefly interested in the speech's literary artifice, its blend of burlesque and seriousness, its witty literary allusions to Oliver Goldsmith and Cervantes—and especially its concluding riff on Frederick Marryat and the sea chantey about the “bright Mullater” called “Sally Brown.”

In a brief and somewhat opaque analysis, Kaplan identifies Marryat's travelogue, *A Diary in America*, as Lincoln's exact source for “Sally Brown.” Fixing on the political uses of “the language of race,”

Kaplan speculates about Lincoln's literary entitlements in quoting the song. He then shows how Lincoln bent the song's true meaning, which had to do with eros, not race; and he concludes that, at least in 1852, Lincoln shared in the dominant racist discourse of his time. So the actual subject of Franklin Pierce and the speech's actual politics have receded into a thicket of words and Lincoln's misappropriated metaphors and the discursive practices of the 1850s. It is a small example of the much larger dangers of approaching Lincoln primarily as a writer.

Kaplan has actually written two books in one, the first a brief biography that pays special attention to Lincoln's omnivorous reading and favorite authors, the second a series of *explications de texte* from Lincoln's writings, ranging from his amateur poetry to the second inaugural address. Historians and biographers have long pointed to Lincoln's deep affection for Shakespeare and the King James Bible, for Burns and Byron, for *Aesop's Fables*. Kaplan, who concentrates on Lincoln's pre-presidential years, fills out Lincoln's debt to Burns and Byron. It is interesting to know more about these specific connections, but they will come as no great surprise to anyone familiar with the historical literature on American culture before the Civil War.

Burns was fabulously popular in nineteenth-century America, especially among up-from-under strivers such as Lincoln, who disdained snobbery and affirmed a broad affection for their plebeian democratic roots. As for Byron, also a popular favorite, it is hard to think of a young American idealist who was not touched by the Byronic sartorial style as well as by Byron's poetry (at least until 1869, when Harriet Beecher Stowe's exposé of Byron's incestuous love life caused a scandal). It would have been far more curious had the bookish Lincoln *not* enjoyed and memorized Burns and Byron.

Kaplan's weightier assertion is that Lincoln's literary reading is the key to understanding not just his writing but his very identity. But what difference did all that reading actually make? More than any other president save Jefferson and John Quincy Adams, Lincoln certainly quoted and alluded to great literature—although this may have reflected, on Lincoln's part, a prideful habit common among bookish autodidacts. Still, Lincoln was no mere literary name-dropper. As Kaplan argues, like many others before him, the graceful and condensed prose of Lincoln's finest efforts, especially after 1854, reflected his immersion in Shakespeare and the Bible, as well as his training in the law.

There is justice in Kaplan's description of the Second Inaugural Address as closer to a dramatic soliloquy than to the usual oratory at a presidential swearing-in—although this had as much to do with Lincoln's genuine anguish and confusion in 1865 as with any literary design. Weary, tormented, and uncertain, Lincoln was talking to himself as much as he was to the nation.

Yet Kaplan goes much too far in making Lincoln a literary man, and in making Lincoln's use of words the key to his soul and his greatness. Kaplan hears all sorts of "Shakespearean resonance" and similar echoings in Lincoln's speeches. Some of this is certainly there, but some of it is

also an illusion—and some of Lincoln's most "literary" work actually echoes American politicians, not British playwrights and poets. It is this indifference to the political context, and to Lincoln's immersion in political writing, that leads Kaplan astray.

Consider an example. Analyzing Lincoln's powerful closing to his "House Divided" speech of 1858, Kaplan pauses over its description of a united Republican Party drawn from "*strange, discordant*," and even *hostile* elements," in contrast to the divided Democrats, who were "*wavering*, dissevered and belligerent." Here is a passage, Kaplan rhapsodizes, that "emulated the distinctive



Fifth Lincoln-Douglas debate, October 7, 1858

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intensity of Shakespearean language,” and represents “the best of literary English from Shakespearean oration to Tennyson’s ‘Ulysses.’” In particular, he claims, the speech’s “distinctively original use of ‘discordant’ and ‘dissevered’ make this mission statement the most distinctively powerful by any American president.” The trouble is, these words and lines came, in some cases directly, from Daniel Webster’s famous second reply to Robert Hayne delivered in 1830, one of Lincoln’s favorite congressional speeches. Lincoln’s meaning was different, but his “original” prose was not Shakespearean, it was Websterian—not John, nor even Noah, but Daniel.

Lincoln was a politician, and he regularly looked for inspiration, including literary inspiration, from his political predecessors. When composing his First Inaugural Address amid the mounting secession crisis, he asked to be brought copies of three works: public pronouncements by Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay, and Daniel Webster. The heart of Lincoln’s “House Divided” address—which was to deny any historical, political, or philosophical justification for secession—was a gloss on Jackson’s proclamation denouncing the South Carolina nullification movement at the end of 1832. When Lincoln spoke, later in the speech, of American democracy, and asked if there was “any better or equal hope in the world,” or when he again spoke of American government, in his annual message in 1862, as “the last best hope of earth,” his words owed nothing to Shakespeare and everything to Jefferson, whose first inaugural address referred to “this Government, the world’s best hope.”

Kaplan’s vaunting of the literary reflects a deeper problem, which is to present Lincoln’s words and rhetoric as his chief asset—even, at times, his only asset. Kaplan correctly observes that “for Lincoln, words mattered immensely.” He has a point when he argues that Lincoln’s “lifelong development as a writer” gave him “the capacity to express himself and the national concerns more effectively than any president ever had, with the exception of Thomas Jefferson”—although how strong that point actually is depends on what one means by “effectively.” But to say that Lincoln “became what his language made him” is an English department conceit. Lincoln may have relied on his speaking and writing abilities more than some or even most, but like any self-made man—including stump-speaking politicians—he became who he became because of much more than his language.

To say, as Kaplan does, that, as president-elect, “the only weapon [Lincoln] had at his command was language” ignores the many weapons that Lincoln not only commanded but actually wielded before his inauguration, including his political clout and his ability to shut down efforts at compromise in Washington that conceded too much. Later, as if concerned that his readers might be getting the wrong impression, Kaplan draws back a little, and observes that “words could not prevent the war, and by themselves words could of course not fight the war.” That such a ridiculous sentence even appears in Kaplan’s book indicates how much it overvalues rhetoric.

INDEED, IT WAS just as well for Lincoln, and the nation, that the Union’s fate did not rest on the power of Lincoln’s prose. If by “effective” one means “effectual” or “consequential,” instead of merely “impressive” or “eloquent,” then Lincoln’s words had a mixed record indeed. His powerful speeches from 1854 through 1860, above all the Cooper Institute address and the “House Divided” speech, as well as the newspaper accounts of his debates with Stephen A. Douglas in 1858, were certainly crucial in making Lincoln a national figure and gaining him his party’s presidential nomination. But the First Inaugural Address, even with its moving appeals to “the mystical chords of memory” and “the better angels of our nature,” could not forestall the crisis at Fort Sumter—or prevent Virginia and three other southern states from seceding in April and May 1861—thereby, as Kaplan admits, failing “in its primary purpose.” The Gettysburg Address powerfully summarized what the Union cause had become in the aftermath of the Emancipation Proclamation; and it won praise from various listeners and readers, including the day’s main orator, Edward Everett; and it certainly accomplished its primary purpose, which was to dedicate a military cemetery—but it did not alleviate northern weariness with the war, or prevent Lincoln’s political standing from plummeting seven months later owing to the military stalemate and high casualties. (For several months thereafter, until Sherman’s smashing victory in Atlanta in September 1864, it remained doubtful that Lincoln would win re-election.)

The Second Inaugural Address—one of the shortest presidential inauguration speeches ever, composed with victory close at hand—superbly justified the Union effort and described the sin of slavery as somehow the war’s cause; and it did so with resounding Shakespearean

as well as Biblical overtones. Some critics at the time hailed it as the masterpiece that it was. Lincoln’s murder six weeks later makes it impossible to know how the speech might have affected future events. Still, with Lincoln dead, the most frequent references to this speech over the decades to come, and even into our own time, skipped over the passages about “the bond-man’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil” and about “blood drawn with the lash,” and moved directly to “with malice toward none; with charity for all”—which unreconstructed southern whites turned into a plea for lenience and eventually used as a conservative pitch to obstruct racial equality. Strangely, the greatest effect of the Second Inaugural Address, at least through the 1950s, may have been in helping to fabricate the pro-southern Lincoln later inflated and favored by Thomas Dixon and put on the screen by D. W. Griffith.

BY CONTRAST, President Lincoln’s most effective document was one of his least literary. Historians have gone back and forth over the years on the significance of the Emancipation Proclamation. Most are now inclined to agree with the late John Hope Franklin that, even with all its limitations, the proclamation set in motion the train of events that led to slavery’s abolition under the Thirteenth Amendment. “The first step,” Frederick Douglass called it, “on the part of the nation in its departure from the thralldom of the ages.” Kaplan correctly describes the proclamation as “perhaps the single most consequential document of Lincoln’s presidency,” but neither he nor anybody else can call it a literary masterpiece or anything close—something that Kaplan tries to explain away as a paradox. As Richard Hofstadter once observed, the proclamation had “all the moral grandeur of a bill of lading.” And yet words *can* be more than just words, even if they are dry legalisms—especially when they are backed up by the full force of the federal government, including the army.

The point is not that presidential oratory makes no historical difference, especially in swaying or consolidating public opinion. Think of Andrew Jackson’s message vetoing the re-charter of the Second Bank of the United States in 1832 (which insured his re-election), or his nullification proclamation (though that, too, was backed up with the threat of force). And think of Franklin Roosevelt’s First Inaugural Address or his fireside chats. All were powerfully convincing in their own ways, although none of them even approached the splendor of Lincoln’s great

addresses. Presidential rhetoric certainly can persuade, placate, or inspire people to action, whether the presidents actually write their own words (as Lincoln did) or rely on speechwriters and cabinet members. But just as presidential language need not be eloquent in any classic literary sense to get things done, so eloquence is no guarantee that the words will be effective, or even right.

IV.

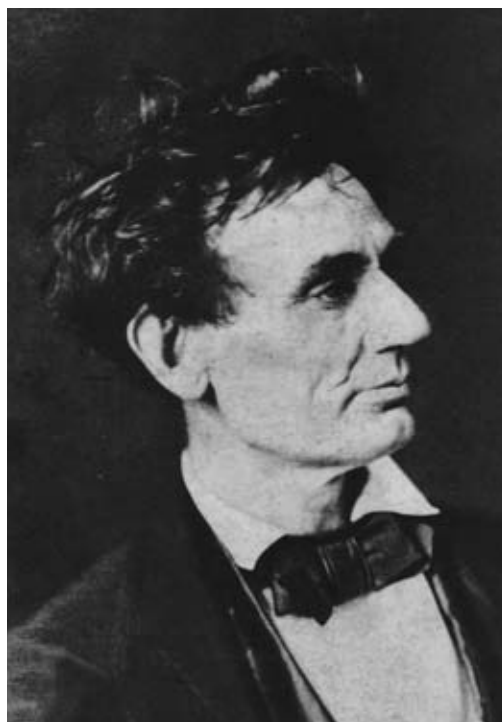
FOR MANY YEARS, the literary scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr. has been vigorously expanding and institutionalizing the study of African American literature and history, bringing to light forgotten writings by black authors, and serving as a link between the academy and an American mass audience. His work, in print and on television, blends the worlds of scholarship, antiquarianism, and entertainment. In *Lincoln on Race & Slavery*, Gates takes another step in this mixed direction by writing on a matter which, he admits, he had not previously studied, but had to work up in order to write, host, and narrate a bicentennial documentary for the Public Broadcasting System.

Along with his co-editor, Donald Yacovone, Gates has chosen seventy writings by Lincoln on the subjects of slavery and race, and reprinted either their key passages or the entire document. Thanks to the Internet, this compilation could not have taken up too much time or energy: if you go to the online edition of Lincoln's collected works and enter the word "slavery" into the site's simple search engine, all but a few of the book's documents instantly appear, in chronological order, along with a few dozen more, all ready for downloading. Gates and Yacovone do provide headnotes, which the printed and online full editions of the collected works lack—a useful service, even though the information provided is not entirely accurate.

Unlike Kaplan, Gates is more interested in the substance than the style of Lincoln's writing. He says nothing about Shakespeare; instead, more like a historian, he devotes a long introductory essay to making sense of Lincoln's ideas about slavery and race. Gates describes being struck by the discovery that Lincoln developed quite distinct lines of thinking about the two subjects—as well as about a third subject, colonization, or the idea that blacks, once emancipated, ought to be strongly encouraged, and even given

funds, to resettle voluntarily in Africa or in some other tropical destination far from the United States. What is truly striking, though, is that Gates is so surprised by what he found in Lincoln's writings. Eric Foner's study of the ideology of the antebellum Republican Party, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*—which was published nearly forty years ago, and remains required reading in many undergraduate as well as graduate history courses—laid out the important distinctions. College textbooks have presented them for a long time.

The basic connections between slavery and racism before the Civil War are straightforward. Essentially, the nation divided into three groups on the issues



1857

of slavery and race. Virtually all pro-slavery Americans believed absolutely in white supremacy, and thought that inferior blacks merited bondage. All Americans who believed in racial equality were adamantly anti-slavery. And most anti-slavery American whites believed, to one degree or another, that blacks were inferior. The first of these three groups, the pro-slavery forces, dominated the white South. The second group, the abolitionist radicals, represented a minority of whites in the North, and believed that slavery should be abolished immediately throughout the entire country. The third, by 1860, represented a majority of the white North, and it included a wide spectrum of views about race.

The most conservative of the non-abolitionist anti-slavery northerners were vicious racists who wanted to halt slavery's expansion in order to keep the western territories lily white. At the liberal end were those who believed that blacks, although inferior to whites, were human beings and should be emancipated. Unlike the abolitionists, these anti-slavery northerners, whatever their view of blacks, wanted to end slavery, but in accordance with what most Americans believed were the Constitution's protections for slavery where it already existed. As an important first step toward putting slavery on the defensive, they fought to prohibit slavery's expansion into the territories. Lincoln, after 1854, became a pre-eminent political leader of this broad anti-slavery group, with views on race that were decidedly at the more liberal end.

The colonization idea attracted some slaveholders in the upper South and, for a time, a few black activists in the North, as well as some non-abolitionist but anti-slavery white northerners. Again, there was a spectrum of opinion about race among the pro-colonizationists. Racist conservatives wanted to encourage colonization simply to rid the country of hateful sub-human blacks. Other supporters of colonization believed that, given the fierceness of white racial prejudice and the long chain of abuses under slavery, it would be better for whites and freedmen alike if they went their separate ways. (Some of these supporters also saw colonization as a means to prevent interracial sex and marriage, from which most white Americans publicly recoiled.) Lincoln, following his first great political hero, the Kentucky Whig slaveholder Henry Clay, held to the latter view, which as late as 1862

he supported as the best possible solution to the nation's racial torment. Anti-colonizationists, meanwhile, included slaveholders and their allies, who wanted to keep black bondmen enslaved and in America, as well as white abolitionists who, along with the African Americans, slave and free, wanted to bring racial equality to America.

Gates dispenses his lessons respectfully. For the most part, he places Lincoln correctly in these different groups and along these different measures, even though it requires conceding that Lincoln fell far short of our own conceptions of justice and humanity. Amid the current bicentennial emoting, it is refreshing to read an evaluation of Lincoln

that refuses, as Gates writes, to “romanticize him as the first American president completely to transcend race and racism.” Yet Gates presents also his own dramatic—and utterly unpersuasive—version of the fanciful “two Lincolns” script. Several basic facts of political and constitutional history elude him, as do certain nuances of political speech and political strategy. And on some crucial issues his analysis is very poor.

According to Gates, Lincoln’s most “radical”—and therefore his most admirable—achievement was to overcome Jefferson’s limitations and proclaim that blacks as well as whites should be included in the Declaration’s “self-evident truth” that all men are created equal. Whatever he may have learned from Sally Hemings, Gates remarks suavely, Jefferson (although in principle anti-slavery) believed that blacks were sub-human, and he did not include them within his definition of men in 1776. Lincoln, by contrast, “most certainly and most impressively did”; and although this “rather radical” belief never led Lincoln to embrace full social and political equality between blacks and whites, it did propel him to the point where, at the end of his life, he declared his limited support for black suffrage—the first American president to do so.

A correction is immediately required regarding Thomas Jefferson. In 1785, Jefferson did advance in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*—as “a suspicion only,” he added—“that the blacks ... are inferior to the whites in the endowments of body and mind,” and he proceeded to explain why, in terms that today are hair-raising. There is a strong case to be made, on this account, that he did not have blacks in mind when he wrote the Declaration nine years earlier—although it is by no means as certain as Gates concludes. (Hopeful slaves and angry slaveholders of Lincoln’s time took Jefferson at his word in the Declaration. So did Lincoln.) But as it happens, later in the *Notes*, Jefferson observed that slavery removed “in the minds of the people that [their] liberties are of the gift of God”—that slavery is a human usurpation of men’s God-given natural rights to liberty. Gates ignores these significant observations. They suggest that although Jefferson thought blacks inferior to whites, he still considered them human beings. If so, Jefferson’s thinking (though not his political action) ran closer to the “rather radical” Lincoln than Gates allows.

In any event, Jefferson, just before he left the presidency in 1809, had second thoughts about his earlier writing about

black inferiority, and he hazarded ideas about slavery and race not unlike those that Gates praises in the mature Lincoln. Early in 1809, in a letter to Henri Grégoire, the French radical priest and abolitionist, Jefferson declared that he had offered his earlier views on blacks “with great hesitation,” and that he had based them only on his limited personal observations, and that he wished to see their “complete refutation.” Above all, Jefferson asserted, the “degree of [the blacks’] talent” ought never to become “a measure of their rights.” Just because Isaac Newton was superior to others in intellect and understanding, Jefferson wrote, “he was not therefore lord of the person and property of others.” Indeed, Jefferson told Grégoire that he hoped that one day blacks would be placed “on an equal footing with the other colors of the human family.” So Gates’s claim that Jefferson “never stated ... in his writings” that blacks were human is simply false.

ON OTHER POINTS, Gates takes Lincoln to task. He is inclined to endorse Frederick Douglass’s assertions that Lincoln hated slavery chiefly as an economic system that degraded all labor and hurt poor whites, and that it was for the good of whites, not blacks, that he fought slavery as he did. Now, it is without question that what Foner has called the “free labor” argument against slavery did form a part of anti-slavery’s principled core (just as it deeply informed the more radical abolitionists’ arguments); and Lincoln certainly shared this view. But it is unfair to slight Lincoln’s repeated affirmations that he also considered human bondage a moral abomination, and that blacks, as humans, had the same basic rights as whites to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is especially unfair of Gates to describe these broad rights to individual selfhood strictly as economic rights.

The unfairness becomes clearer by broadening the context to include such anti-slavery leaders as Representative David Wilmot of Pennsylvania, the author of the famous Wilmot Proviso in 1846 that tried to restrict slavery’s expansion (for which Congressman Lincoln voted and which Frederick Douglass applauded). In fighting slavery’s spread, Wilmot said, he harbored no “morbid sympathy for the slave,” but was trying to keep the West open for “free white laborers” and “a white man’s country,” and to stop any possibility that northern whites would be ruled by men who had been suckled by “some damn Negro wench.” Lincoln, the native Kentuckian, occasionally

used words such as “nigger” and “Cuffee” on the stump and in conversation, even after he was elected president, which would have made him a gross violator of later racial etiquette across the nation. But he did not assert the crude racism of those such as Wilmot, who insisted that they opposed slavery purely and simply in order to benefit the white man. (Wilmot, incidentally, later altered his views about slavery’s cruelty to blacks.)

BY CONCENTRATING on Lincoln’s writings about race and slavery, Gates also misunderstands how much more besides race affected Lincoln’s political approach to slavery. Apart from the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery in 1865, Gates does not discuss the Constitution much, even though references to it abound in the Lincoln documents that he has selected, and even though constitutional issues were pivotal in Lincoln’s thinking about both slavery and the Union. For Lincoln, to destroy slavery while destroying the Constitution would have been no victory at all, as it would demonstrate to the world that the American Revolution and republican government were follies or frauds—impervious to reform. Yet in accord with most anti-slavery men, Lincoln held that, like it or not, the Constitution tolerated and even protected slavery in the states where it already existed. How, then, could Americans abolish slavery under the terms of their own Constitution?

As of 1860, there was absolutely no possibility that Congress would pass, and that the states would ratify, a constitutional amendment banning slavery, which would have been the only peaceable and constitutional way for the federal government to outlaw bondage everywhere. Nor was there any possibility that the cotton states of the Deep South, or even the less slave-dependent states of the upper South, would abolish slavery on their own anytime soon. On that account, a minority of radical abolitionists, most conspicuously William Lloyd Garrison, concluded that the Constitution was morally bankrupt. But most of the anti-slavery forces, Lincoln among them, concluded that they would have to attack slavery where they believed the Constitution gave the federal government the power to do so, chiefly by barring slavery from the territories.

These anti-slavery advocates believed that, as an economic system, plantation slavery would have to expand or it would die. Halting its expansion thus amounted to a sentence of gradual death. (On this point, the slaveholders agreed.) Political

cally, the addition of new free states out of the vast territories added from the Mexican War, as well as the remainder of the Louisiana Purchase lands, would break the hammerlock that the South had long enjoyed in Washington over the slavery issue. This was what Lincoln meant when he spoke of putting slavery in the course of ultimate extinction—by containing it, as opposed to permitting slavery's expansion which, he said, would put the nation "on the high-road to a slave empire."

SOME HISTORIANS claim that Lincoln conceded that the choking off of slavery that he had in mind would take at least a hundred years to complete—a poor reflection on Lincoln's anti-slavery zeal. Gates accepts the claim, and writes, cuttingly, that "at that rate, some black people born in my birth year, 1950, would have been born slaves." Lincoln's actual remarks, delivered during his debates with Stephen A. Douglas in 1858, were far less definitive, and more like throwaway lines than position statements. They hardly endorsed the concept of a gradual emancipation protracted over the century to come. But the important point is that, until the Civil War, and even through the war's opening months, most Americans thought of emancipation in terms of one form or another of gradual emancipation. That was how slavery had come to an end in parts of the Caribbean and Latin America, as well as in the northern United States. (New Jersey passed its emancipation law in 1804, yet in 1860 there were still a few slaves in the state, called "apprentices for life.")

Any proposal for gradual emancipation, in whatever form, in the United States was generally taken as a serious attack on slavery. And the slaveholders knew as much. To them, the principle of non-extension was a radical threat to slavery's survival. Thus, Lincoln's election as president in 1860, along with the election of a Republican majority in the House, was sufficient to convince the Deep South states that they ought immediately to secede from the Union.

Secession, which Lincoln called "the essence of anarchy," amounted to precisely the strike against the Constitution that was anathema to him and other anti-slavery non-abolitionists. And so Lincoln, during his first two years as president, repeatedly told his abolitionist critics that he was fighting to save the Union and not to "put down slavery" or "upset slavery"—that is, to abolish slavery in the rebel states where it already existed.

But this did not mean that Lincoln (as Frederick Douglass and other abolitionists suspected) had suddenly abandoned his belief that the work on dismantling slavery ought to begin. It meant that he wanted to restore the Union as it existed in 1861—with a democratically elected federal government that was determined to commence the process of emancipation by banning slavery's expansion. When, by the spring of 1862, it became clear to Lincoln that such a restoration was no longer viable, he began looking into emancipation using his powers as commander-in-chief.

SO IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to understand the seriousness of Lincoln's anti-slavery politics before 1862 without paying close attention to his ideas, and to the ideas of others, about the Constitution. Yet Gates virtually ignores the Constitution, or he dismisses concerns about its integrity as underhanded evasions. This ahistorical judgment leads Gates to complain, a little obtusely, that Lincoln only occasionally and obliquely recognized slavery as the basic cause of the Civil War until he delivered his forceful Second Inaugural Address in 1865. In fact, between 1854 and 1865, virtually every speech Lincoln delivered, and every political letter that he wrote (including those that Gates reprints), made it clear, at some level, that slavery and its expansion lay at the heart of the sectional divide.

When Lincoln spoke in 1858 about a house divided against itself not being able to stand, he was not talking about divisions over state rights, or internal improvements, or the tariff. Lincoln's First Inaugural Address in 1861—in passages that Gates actually cites in his introduction and includes in his edited documents—not only defined the difference between North and South as a conflict over slavery's expansion; it also described the difference as an essentially moral struggle in which "one section of our country believes slavery is *right* ... while the other believes it is *wrong*." Was there any doubt that Dixie's secession, which triggered the war, did not chiefly concern slavery, and southern fears for slavery's future under Lincoln and the Republicans? One had only to read the official address that justified South Carolina's secession, which referred directly to "an increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding states to the institution of slavery."

Lincoln did not, to be sure, go on, in his First Inaugural Address, to describe why he thought human bondage was

ELIZABETH BRACKETT

Pay to Play

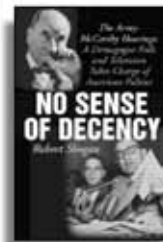
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cruel and intolerable, as he would in brief but powerful detail under the vastly different political circumstances of his second inauguration after four years of war. For sound political and constitutional reasons, Lincoln kept the suppression of the secessionist rebellion front and center throughout the fighting; and he framed the struggle in those terms, at least through 1862. But even before the first shot was fired, Lincoln certainly recognized that slavery was, as Gates puts it, “the origin of the war.”

In effect, Gates—and he is not alone—holds that the radical abolitionist view of slavery and its immediate and total eradication is the only one worthy of respect, let alone serious consideration. He denigrates not just Lincoln but the core of the Republican Party’s platform of 1860—that the containment of slavery would begin slavery’s destruction—when he writes, more than a little contemptuously, that Lincoln “could live with slavery if he had to.” This may express a noble morality, but it is bad history: it fundamentally distorts what Lincoln and the anti-slavery political movement actually believed, and how Lincoln and that movement—which eventually sparked secession and freed the slaves—actually evolved.

IRONICALLY, THIS neglect of the political and constitutional context leads Gates, the trained literary scholar, to misunderstand how the political leader, Lincoln, used words. Lincoln’s secretaries John G. Nicolay and John Hay once observed that “to measure right [Lincoln’s] utterance as a whole” the surrounding “conditions . . . must continually be kept in mind,” but Gates does not heed the warning. Consider a conspicuous example. In the late summer of 1862, amid a pressure campaign by the radicals, the eccentric but influential left-wing Republican editor Horace Greeley criticized Lincoln for not pursuing emancipation more aggressively. Lincoln was happy to reply that he was determined to save the Union whether it would mean freeing all the slaves or freeing none of the slaves. Standing up to the importuning left wing of the Republican Party was a surefire way for Lincoln to shore up his support among moderate and conservative northerners—parsing his words carefully in order to sound cautious and responsible without in any way contradicting the constitutionalist anti-slavery views that he had proclaimed when running for president.

It was all the better—indeed, it was imperative—to do so because, unbeknownst to Greeley and his allies, Lincoln had

begun drafting the Emancipation Proclamation more than a month earlier. He would sign and release to the public the preliminary version of the document only a few weeks later, when he thought the time was ripe—undercutting the radicals completely, while inevitably stirring up trouble among northern moderates and conservatives. Lincoln’s reply to Greeley was not, as Gates says it was, a white moderate’s declaration of his cautious and even callous determination to ignore the slavery issue in order to advance the Union cause. It was an example of Lincoln shrewdly and successfully manipulating Greeley to suit his immediate political end, which was to calm conservative fears prior to issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. Gates’s headnote covering Lincoln’s reply to Greeley does appreciate better the president’s deeper political strategy—but also sneers at it as “a transparent attempt to disarm conservative political rivals” which heightened black leaders’ distrust of Lincoln. Once again, the realities of politics—and the political realities that Lincoln faced—are trumped by an abstract moralism.

V.

THIS BRINGS US again to the “two Lincolns” story. Gates’s confusion about words and politics also lies behind his own variation of this myth. Lincoln, he writes, experienced a “great sea change” in his thinking about the war during the summer of 1862. Until then, supposedly, Lincoln refused to acknowledge that slavery had caused the war, and was adamant about not recruiting blacks into the army. Only after the war went badly for the Union in 1861 and 1862, Gates claims, did Lincoln conclude, in despair, that the emancipation of the slaves in the rebel states and the recruitment of black troops were acute military necessities. Yet even as he prepared to sign the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in September 1862, Gates observes, Lincoln told a delegation of two anti-slavery ministers from Chicago not only that an edict of emancipation would be useless “as we are now situated,” but also that he feared black soldiers lacked competence and would be overrun by the rebel forces.

Why, then, did Lincoln change his mind about recruiting blacks, including ex-slaves? Gates, the literary critic and rare-book lover, finds the key to the riddle in a literary text. Specifically, Gates proclaims that Lincoln came to his senses after reading a brief book called *An Historical Research Respecting the Opinions of the Founders of the Republic*

on Negroes as Slaves, as Citizens and Soldiers, written by one George Livermore—a Cambridge, Massachusetts abolitionist, merchant, bibliophile, and collector of Americana—about the Founding Fathers’ admiration of black soldiers during the American Revolution. One of the headnotes in Gates’s book is more emphatic, stating that Livermore’s writing had “persuaded” Lincoln by the late summer of 1862 about the Founding Fathers’ views—a chronological impossibility at the very least, since Livermore’s book was not even published until October 1862, and Lincoln did not receive a copy of it until November. Anyway, that book turns out to have been influenced by an earlier volume written by the black abolitionist William C. Nell. It was, Gates writes, “quite cleverly” presented to President Lincoln—in what Gates calls “an important, and little noted, subtle coup”—by Senator Charles Sumner, the Massachusetts radical Republican, and a friend of Livermore. In Gates’s telling, the scales then fell from the president’s eyes, and Lincoln changed his policies. Thereafter black soldiers fought so valiantly that Lincoln completely repudiated his earlier doubts, and became the black troops’ greatest champion—a change that eventually pushed the president into contemplating limited black suffrage once the war was over.

Gates’s account of Lincoln’s conversion experience makes greater allowance than some historians and critics do for the military exigencies of the war. But it also amounts to a variation of the old populist story: instead of arguing that runaway slaves prompted the Emancipation Proclamation, Gates says that Lincoln’s opposition to black recruitment changed with Sumner’s “coup” of giving the president a book influenced by a black abolitionist writer, and that thereafter the intrepid black troops began changing his mind about blacks in general. The problem is that most of what Gates says about the decision-making behind emancipation and black recruitment is either dubious or inaccurate, and much of it is preposterous, and some of it runs afoul of basic scholarly standards.

One weakness of Gates’s introduction is its almost complete neglect of Congress (apart from the Sumner-Livermore episode), and Congress’s major and continuing impact both on Lincoln and the entire process of emancipation. (Through the spring of 1862, Congress passed several pieces of important emancipation legislation which Lincoln duly approved, including the abolition of slavery in the nation’s territories and compensated

emancipation in the District of Columbia.) Gates also misconstrues the chronology of Lincoln's thinking about emancipation and the effects of the changing military situation—matters his own documents could have helped clarify. Although the project failed, Lincoln first proposed a plan for compensated emancipation in the state of Delaware by the end of 1861—well before the military defeats of the spring and summer of 1862.

The summer of 1862 had barely begun when Lincoln read his initial draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to Secretary of State Seward and Secretary of the Navy Welles; and less than ten days later he discussed his draft at a meeting of the full cabinet. Certainly the Union reversals in the Seven Days' Battles during the last week of June had some bearing on Lincoln's decision to move ahead—but not, as Gates suggests, the continuing Union defeats that culminated in the second battle of Bull Run, which was not fought until the end of August. More important, Lincoln's thinking had more to do with the Union's securing greater political and military control in Kentucky beginning in the winter of 1861–1862. Lincoln had long feared that any premature move toward emancipation would cause Kentucky and other border states to secede, greatly complicating the Union's titanic military challenge. And even though Kentucky, like Delaware, rejected Lincoln's proposal—delivered in March 1862, and included in Gates's documents—for a general and gradual emancipation plan for the border states, a great constraint on Lincoln had been alleviated. Opportunities opened by Union military success, and not simply (as Gates reports) the harsh lessons of failure, affected the politics that led to the Emancipation Proclamation.

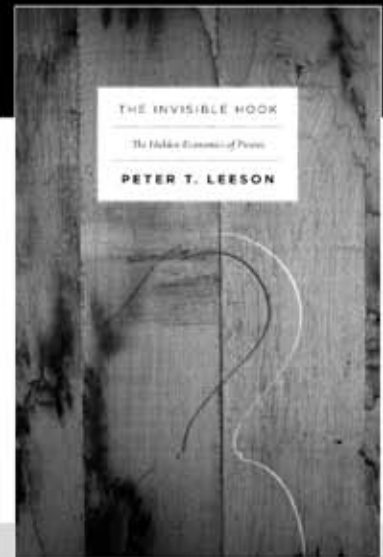
AS FOR BLACK military service, Gates's neglect of Congress once again hurts his analysis. The Militia Act of 1862, approved by Lincoln in July, was a major advance, as many abolitionists recognized at the time. Lincoln's shifts on black recruitment, meanwhile, were part of a prolonged and deeply political process—not some imaginary sea change. As early as September 1861, Lincoln approved Secretary Welles's authorization to recruit black sailors—a minor and uncontroversial step at the time, but an indication that Lincoln did not think that blacks were incompetent in combat. Then, in April and May 1862, when Congress began debating the legislation that moved toward enlisting blacks in the army, Secretary of War Stanton (who was

quicker than Lincoln to favor recruiting black soldiers, and then more vehement about it) quietly encouraged the Union military in South Carolina to start arming blacks—a move that was inconceivable without Lincoln's approval.

The general in command in South Carolina was David Hunter (whom Lincoln had long known and liked, dating back to Hunter's service in Kansas before the war, which had begun during the "Bleeding Kansas" struggles of 1856). Hunter raised the black troops and also issued an order, without formal authorization from his civilian superiors, emancipating the slaves on the Sea Islands of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. Lincoln may well have tacitly supported or even quietly initiated Hunter's emancipation order, as a ploy to see how far emancipation could now be pushed. (Lincoln had curtly ended the freelance emancipation effort by General John C. Frémont in Missouri in 1861, which he thought had reached the point of insubordination and political recklessness.) Hunter apparently did not believe that he was violating the administration's wishes. ("I believe he rejoiced in my action," Hunter said of Lincoln, though politics barred the president from openly admitting as much.) But Hunter also seized slaves from captured plantations and draftered them into military service; and he unnecessarily offended white soldiers, as well as two Kentucky congressmen. One Union officer who later commanded black troops said that Hunter's recruiting tactics were "valuable as an example of how not to do it."

When the northern press reacted with immediate and nearly universal hostility to Hunter's emancipation order, Lincoln denied that he had any foreknowledge of it and publicly rescinded it—but he did not rebuke Hunter, privately or publicly, and he did not disband his black troops, let alone relieve him of his command, as he had done with Frémont. Hard at work formulating the Emancipation Proclamation and concerned about its prospects, Lincoln then staged his own tactical—that is to say, political—retreat during the summer of 1862 by refusing to use the full authority granted him by Congress's Second Confiscation Act, which liberated the slaves of rebels, and by stating repeatedly that he would not approve a general order to arm blacks "unless some new and more pressing emergency arises." On August 10, after Stanton refused to recognize and to pay his black troops, a disheartened General Hunter reported to the Secretary of War that he was disbanding all but one company of his black volunteers.

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What happened next required no “subtle coup” by Charles Sumner, the abolitionists, George Livermore, or anyone else. At the end of August, Stanton authorized Brigadier General Rufus Saxton, an abolitionist in Beaufort, South Carolina, to pick up where Hunter had left off and recruit up to five thousand black volunteers. Lieutenant Charles Francis Adams Jr.—the grandson of John Quincy Adams and the son of the anti-slavery stalwart Charles Francis Adams—reflected on the affair: “Why could not fanatics be silent and let Providence work for awhile?” That is, Adams believed that had Hunter displayed more political sense, he might not have lost the confidence of Stanton and Lincoln. But whether Hunter had truly lost the administration’s confidence or was simply a pawn in a game that Lincoln was playing soon became a moot point. On September 13, 1862, Lincoln met the black ministers from Chicago and, in line with the public impression he had been giving since the summer, remarked that he had grave doubts about enlisting black soldiers as well as about ordering emancipation. Yet, before the month was over, blacks were being recruited into the Union Army, albeit on a limited basis, under General Saxton—by direct order of the War Department, and with no objection from President Lincoln.

In Louisiana and in Kansas, other Union generals began enlisting black troops in August—efforts that Lincoln did not explicitly authorize, but also did nothing to stop. The esteemed historian Benjamin Quarles called them “trial balloons.” In late October, Lincoln met with Colonel Daniel Ullmann, an erstwhile New York lawyer and politician, who proposed that Lincoln enlist black troops. Lincoln asked Ullmann whether he was willing to command black soldiers. The New Yorker replied that he was, and he went on to gain authorization to organize a brigade of black soldiers; and he led two black regiments which fought in the Union’s initial defeat at Port Hudson. But by then Ullmann was acting under the provisions of the Emancipation Proclamation which, in its final version, included (almost in passing) a stipulation about black recruitment omitted in the preliminary draft. Various pressures, not least Stanton’s insistence and the successes, in South Carolina and elsewhere, in raising credible black units, made possible the adoption of a policy that Lincoln had been gently experimenting with well before he issued his preliminary edict of emancipation.

Gates simply fails to understand what historians have long known was transpiring beneath Lincoln’s political artifice.

He takes Lincoln’s words at face value when it suits his own arguments—such as his remarks to the Chicago ministers in September 1862 about black military incompetence—but he is unable to see Lincoln for what his finest biographers have shown he was: a shrewd leader who could give misleading and even false impressions when he wanted to do so, and made no public commitments until the moment was ripe. So it was with the Emancipation Proclamation, which (on the advice of Seward) Lincoln delayed releasing until after the outcome of the battle of Antietam on September 17, which gave the Union cause more credibility.

And so it was with recruitment of blacks, a policy that Congress advanced and that Lincoln encouraged with stealth and indirection as early as the spring of 1862—always keeping himself immune from political blame in case of failure, waiting until the “trial balloons” had proved successful and public opinion had matured before enunciating the policy in public. He then announced the change in the least conspicuous way imaginable, stating near the close of the legalistic Emancipation Proclamation that “such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places...” This is how politics actually works in Washington, and always has worked. Gates does not comprehend it. This failure yields even stranger results when Gates offers his own account of why Lincoln reversed course on black recruitment—results so strange, and even potentially damaging, that they demand closer examination.

VI.

GATES’S STORY of the great Abraham Lincoln and the unknown George Livermore—a story that, in Gates’s telling, has been long neglected by an indifferent posterity—is interesting for several reasons. If true, it is a striking revisionist explanation of one of Lincoln’s most fateful wartime decisions. It is one of the bolder claims ever made on behalf of the dubious “two Lincolns” conversion story. It feeds the deep yearning of scholars (and not just scholars) to establish at every turn the agency of ordinary, neglected Americans in shaping momentous events—influence from the bottom up that decades and even centuries of elite, great-man history have supposedly suppressed. And this particular story, or rather the continuing story about the story, also shows how a prominent professor’s outlandish claims may quickly attain the semblance of truth.

In an admiring notice of *Lincoln on Race & Slavery* in *The New York Review of Books*, Garry Wills relates the most fallacious version of the story, which he picked up in part from the book’s headnotes, as if it were commonly accepted knowledge among American historians. “Lincoln changed his mind on the usefulness of blacks in the army,” Wills writes confidently, “when he was given [in August 1862] a book by George Livermore that established that Washington had usefully employed black troops during the Revolution.” Since Wills has been authorized as a distinguished expert on Abraham Lincoln, and since his remarks appear in an authoritative place, a bogus account of crucial historical events thus gains authority of its own. It may only be a matter of time before popular histories start telling the stirring tale of how an abolitionist’s little book, inspired by a black writer, changed Lincoln’s mind about recruiting black soldiers, which in turn transformed Lincoln’s views about blacks in general. George Livermore may become one of American history’s unjustly unsung heroes. The only trouble, of course, is that the story is a counterfeit.

Gates does not disclose what sources he has consulted about Livermore, but as near as I can tell the story originated in some passing remarks that appeared in Livermore’s obituary, written by Sumner, in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* on September 2, 1865. None of the major modern scholarly biographers of Lincoln, from Benjamin Thomas to David Herbert Donald, relate the story, or even mention Livermore. (Burlingame’s massive biography makes one trivial reference to Livermore and his book.) A version of the story does appear in a study of Lincoln, published in 2004, by Geoffrey Perrett, a prolific writer of historical biography. Like Gates, Perrett offers no supporting evidence.

And yet one of the headnotes in Gates’s book reports categorically that Livermore’s writing “persuaded” Lincoln “by the late summer of 1862” about the views of the all-important Founding Fathers concerning black troops—again an impossibility, given that Charles Sumner only sent Livermore’s recently published book to Lincoln on November 8. (This misdated account is the one that Garry Wills repeats.) Sumner did, to be sure, write to his friend and constituent Livermore, in late December 1862, to assure him that his study “interested President Lincoln much,” and he added the claim that Lincoln had consulted it while composing the final Emancipation Proclamation. Sumner also claimed that

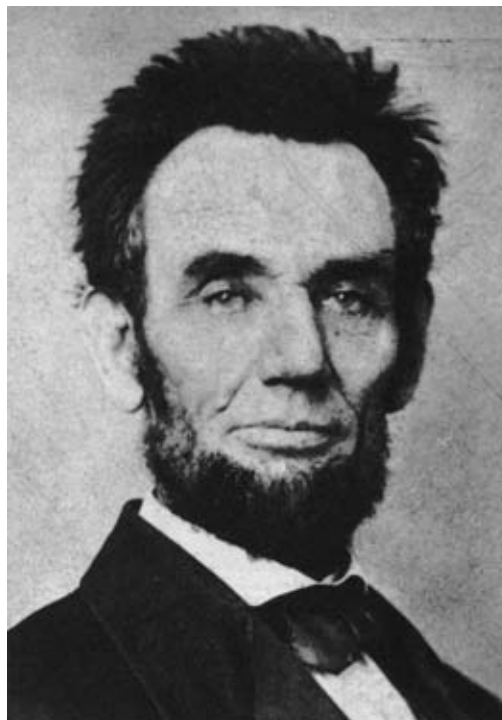
he had sent Lincoln a second gift of the book on Christmas morning after the president told him he had mislaid his copy. (The letters may be viewed online in the Library of Congress's collection of Lincoln's manuscript correspondence.)

But there is nothing whatever in these letters to show that Livermore's writing had any decisive effect on Lincoln's thinking. Lincoln's thoughts turned quietly to the possibility of black recruitment long before Sumner sent Livermore's book to the White House; and by the time Lincoln received the book, the Union had been enlisting black soldiers on a limited basis for months. Nor have I ever read of a single instance when Sumner—whom Lincoln liked, probably best among the radical Republicans, but whom he also regarded as an ally who required careful handling—outfoxed the president on anything. The idea that Sumner pulled off a clever “coup” on so grave and sensitive matter as black enlistment in the Union Army, and that he did so without the knowledge, let alone the involvement, of Secretary of War Stanton, with whom Lincoln was in constant contact, is something between implausible and ludicrous. In any event, there is no evidence for it either in the Sumner-Livermore correspondence that appears in the Lincoln papers at the Library of Congress, or in any of the other Lincoln primary sources on the subject. I seriously doubt that convincing sources are buried away elsewhere. If they are, Gates needs to bring them forward, as he should have in his book.

Another part of the story that Gates tells does appear to be true, or at least half-true. Just how important, in Gates's view, was Livermore's book? “Lincoln supposedly even gave Livermore the pen that he used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation,” Gates records in support of his story, as if Lincoln made a special effort to recognize Livermore's contribution—though Gates then concedes that “the list of claimants to that singular honor is no doubt a long one.” (Once more, the later headnote, curiously, is more emphatic, stating flatly that “Lincoln felt so indebted to Livermore that he gave him the pen he had used to sign the Emancipation Proclamation.”) In fact, the journalist Benjamin Perley Poore (who was present at the event and reported on it for the *Boston Evening Journal*) wrote that Lincoln “carefully” put away the pen—“a steel pen with a wooden handle, the end of which had been gnawed by Mr. Lincoln—a habit

that he had when composing anything that required thought”—so that Lincoln could give it to Sumner, “who had promised it to his friend George Livermore, of Cambridge, the author of an interesting work on slavery.”

Benjamin Quarles, in his classic work, *Lincoln and the Negro*, which was published in 1962 and which Gates does not cite, confirmed that Livermore actually *did* end up with the pen (which now resides across the Charles River from Harvard in the collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society). But Quarles's account about how it all happened demolishes what is left of the “little known” story that Gates thinks is so “important,” as well as the claim in Gates's



1864

book that Lincoln felt “indebted” to Livermore and acknowledged that debt. Quarles recreates the scene immediately after the proclamation's signing:

Seward reached for the document to take it to the State Department for the great seal. Lincoln let nobody take the pen; he had promised to save it for George Livermore of Boston, a friend of Charles Sumner. For several weeks Sumner had plagued Lincoln about the pen. Sumner had been bedeviled in turn by Livermore: “I do so much desire to have that freeing instrument come to Massachusetts,” he wrote on Christmas Day, “that I would do almost anything to get it.”

Sumner hardly needed vigorous prodding. He remembered, as he informed Livermore two days later, that shortly after the District of Columbia Emancipation Act had been signed, he had gone to the White House and asked for the pen Lincoln had used. Lincoln had reached to his desk and taken up a handful of pens, saying, “It was one of these. Which will you take? You are welcome to all.”

This time Sumner was not to be denied. Lincoln signed the Proclamation on a Thursday afternoon; that Saturday's newspapers announced that Sumner had the pen. Two days later, on Monday, January 5, Livermore received it in the mails. Wrote he to Sumner before the sun had set: “No trophy from a battlefield, no sword red with blood, no service of plate with an inscription ... would ever have been to me half as acceptable as this instrument.”

Quarles did not tell quite the whole story, for Livermore wanted as many mementos as he could lay his hands on. (“What becomes of the manuscript of the Proclamation? Is that preserved?” he wrote to Sumner. “That would be still better than the pen—if it could be had after the printer had published it.”) And when Sumner forwarded Livermore's request for the pen to Lincoln, he did mention that Livermore was “the author of the *Historic Research* on slavery in the early days of our Government.” But Quarles's account conforms with everything else that we know about Lincoln and Sumner, about their personal as well as political relations.

It is entirely possible that Lincoln found Livermore's book appealing, and even useful. But there is nothing in the historical record to show that what Perley Poore called Livermore's “interesting work on slavery” in any way “persuaded” Lincoln about black enlistment. And, until and unless Gates provides solid documentation overturning Quarles's account, there is nothing at all behind the claim that Lincoln felt “indebted to Livermore.” There is instead, by Quarles's telling, the faintly comical story of an enthusiastic abolitionist souvenir-hunter, a proud son of the Bay State, bedeviling his friend Senator Sumner; and of Sumner continuing the constituent service that he had begun with the gift to the president of a copy of Livermore's pamphlet, by plaguing Lincoln about the pen. Finally the president, who appears to have been indifferent about which pen signed what, handed over the prize.

GATES'S CREDULITY about historical sources also mars his treatment of Lincoln and colonization. The Emancipation Proclamation in effect stated that a Union victory would mean the immediate end of slavery nationwide—although only the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment by Congress (for which Lincoln pushed before his murder) and its ratification by the states extirpated the Constitution's toleration of slavery once and for all. But as soon as the war for the Union became a war to eliminate bondage, Lincoln had to face up squarely to the question that he had long tried to dodge: What would a post-slavery America look like? Almost instinctively, he clung to the idea of voluntary colonization as ineluctable. In the same message to Congress on December 1, 1862, in which he announced the Emancipation Proclamation, he reasserted his firm support for colonization, and called for a constitutional amendment that, among other things, would permit Congress to fund directly the voluntary colonization of free blacks.

Never again would Lincoln publicly advocate colonization. He did, as Gates writes, approve a contract with a private citizen, at the very end of 1862, to transport a few hundred blacks to an island off the coast of Haiti. (The only colonization project actually undertaken by the Lincoln administration, the venture proved a fiasco.) Lincoln also met with some pro-colonizationists in the spring of 1863. But by the end of 1863, at the very latest, colonization was off the administration's agenda. Indeed, even in his message to Congress in 1862, as Gates's headnotes observe, he began to back off from the scheme, assuring white wage-earners that even if blacks did not emigrate their own wages would not fall, and chastising those who favored colonization out of racial hatred. And yet there have always been writers as well as historians among those who dislike Lincoln—including that great Civil War expert Gore Vidal—who insist that Lincoln never really abandoned his desire for colonization. Since Lincoln never explicitly renounced colonization, these critics say, there is no justification for believing that he ever really did so.

Gates is mindful of Frederick Douglass's excoriating comments, delivered in 1876, that, owing in part to his pro-colonization views, Lincoln was "preeminently the white man's President, entirely devoted to the welfare of white men." (Following Lincoln's assassination in 1865, Douglass had called Lincoln "emphatically the

black man's president: the first to show any respect for their rights as men," but Gates, who quotes the speech as one of his epigraphs, elides this contradiction.) Gates thus gives Lincoln's critics their due, batting back and forth two primary sources that, he claims, might lend their case credence. In 1886 and again in 1892, General Benjamin Butler asserted that, in two meetings with Lincoln in 1865, he received a commission from the president to investigate the practicality of colonization. Earlier, beginning in 1868, Gideon Welles published a series of articles that stated Lincoln always linked emancipation and colonization. Ominously calling the sources deeply "troubling" if "problematic," Gates runs at length through the pro and cons.

Gates's inquiry quickly begins to look like a wild goose chase. Butler's claims are flawed by inaccuracies and logical inconsistencies. Almost any scholar in the field could have told Gates (as, he reports, David Herbert Donald actually did try to tell him) that Butler was, in Donald's words, "a thoroughly untrustworthy witness." More important, Butler's own account states that it was he, Butler, who initially raised the possibility of a colonization scheme in Panama. As usual, Lincoln said nothing too committal either way. He listened politely, and his visitor went away convinced that the president agreed with him. Finally Gates himself is forced to conclude that Butler either misremembered events or purposely tried "to press Lincoln into service for [his] own personal and political cause."

As for Welles, Gates merely infers his claim that Lincoln held fast to his pro-colonization views after 1862. Welles's actual articles are at best ambiguous about the concluding years of the war. Yet none of this rattles Gates, who concludes with the self-assured pronouncement that "I find it perfectly reasonable that a war-weary Abraham Lincoln" won-

dered about "the feasibility of colonizing the bulk of the former slaves" in 1865.

Even if Gates's assertion was based on facts and not on speculation, it would not be particularly important. After all, Lincoln took no public steps toward advancing colonization from January 1, 1863, until the day he died. The actual sources, meanwhile, do little to undermine John Hay's diary entry of July 1, 1864: "I am happy that the President has sloughed off that idea of colonization." (Gates attaches significance to a letter that Lincoln wrote in late November 1864, which in fact did nothing to revive colonization or to indicate Lincoln had the least interest in doing so.) What becomes clearer, although Gates does not explore the matter, is that in 1865 Lincoln had yet to arrive at a coherent vision of what to do after the war was won—that he was feeling his way as he always did, adapting principles to circumstances, figuring out the most feasible way to move the country ahead, but with less clarity than ever about what path to follow, now that slavery was doomed.

IT IS FITTING that it is Frederick Douglass's criticisms of Lincoln that instigate Gates's strained discussion of colonization, for Douglass looms large throughout this book, and especially in Gates's final evaluation of Lincoln, which ends with a direct quotation from Douglass. More than fifty years ago, the easily caricatured but politically gifted Senator Everett Dirksen, Republican of Illinois (then still a member of the House), observed that the first task of any politician is "to get right with . . . Lincoln." Today it sometimes appears that the first task of any American historian of the nineteenth century is to get right with Frederick Douglass. As an escaped slave turned abolitionist agitator, a scintillating orator, a fearless editor, a race man, an integrationist, a feminist (at least at Seneca Falls in 1848), and more, the admirable

Douglass embodied, better than any American of his time, everything that today's academy feels is worthy of supreme honor. In scholarly writings, Douglass invariably gets cited positively. His words cast an aura of nobility that can shut down any dispute. Some historians still sanctify Abraham Lincoln, but for many, if not most, Frederick Douglass is now the era's true hero.

Douglass had an ambivalent view of Lincoln, which Gates discusses in some detail. Although he often praised Lincoln as "the greatest statesman that ever presided over the des-

Brothers

I made a paper replica of your skin
and spread it across my face.

I still couldn't see the silence you drink.
Our words slur as they mix up war

and experience. I fish for your wrist
through this veil of trust and violence.

Help me find your hand to hold it.

SALLY VAN DOREN

tinies of this Republic,” Douglass also denounced his failure to embrace emancipation in 1861 (arguing that the Union would have swiftly crushed the South) as well as his efforts to encourage voluntary colonization. Gates observes that Douglass, in his ambivalence, contained what Gates calls “the duality in assessment that continues to manifest itself among black politicians and scholars,” from the worshipful Booker T. Washington to the excoriating Malcolm X and Lerone Bennett Jr. “to the more nuanced yet strongly favorable assessment of Barack Obama.”

Gates’s own assessment, in line with what he takes to have been Douglass’s analysis, tries to embrace all of these views and add some touches of his own, criticizing Lincoln beyond what the historical evidence discloses, but also praising him. Yet even in his praise of Lincoln, Gates oddly scuttles politics. He cites an essay written in 1922 by W. E. B. Du Bois, who decried Lincoln’s “shifty political methods,” which called Lincoln a monumental historical figure because “he was big enough to be inconsistent—cruel, merciful; peace-loving, a fighter; despising Negroes and letting them fight and vote; protecting slavery and freeing slaves.” To Gates, this translates into prizing Lincoln because “he wrestled with his often contradictory feelings,” and “faced and confronted his own prejudices, and, to a remarkable extent, overcame them.” (What a fine guest on *Oprah* Lincoln would have been!) By combining different African American perspectives on Lincoln, no matter how mutually exclusive; by quoting friends and putative authorities, black and white, all the way from Harvard to *The New Yorker*; and by ending on a positive bicentennial note, Gates does his best to get right with Douglass. He is ready for his gig on PBS. Nobody’s wrong if everybody’s right.

There is one pro-Lincoln passage from Douglass’s speech of 1876, though, that gives Gates a little trouble, because it defends the political side of Lincoln that Gates thoroughly condemns. “Had [Lincoln] put the abolition of slavery before the salvation of the Union,” Douglass conceded, “he would have inevitably driven from him a powerful class of the American people and rendered resistance to rebellion impossible. Viewed from the genuine abolition ground, Mr. Lincoln seemed tardy, cold, dull, and indifferent; but measuring him by the sentiment of his country, a sentiment he was bound as a statesman to consult, he was swift, zealous, radical, and determined.” However much, during the war, Douglass may have quietly appreciated Lincoln’s states-

manship—by which he meant Lincoln’s political skill—he came to appreciate it more years later. It is this crucial core of Lincoln, the political leader, that Gates, the literary critic, cannot fathom.

VII.

ANOTHER BOOK by another literary historian is all about Lincoln and Douglass. Even before its publication, John Stauffer’s *Giants* began to exert its influence, as Gates relied on Stauffer’s interpretations of Lincoln at various points in his own book. Stauffer’s stated objective is to juxtapose the lives of two “giants,” two great men who “stood at the forefront of a major shift in cultural history”—the shift that extended freedom and equality to blacks as well as whites. Yet even though he intends the book as in part a monument to Lincoln, he winds up maligning as well as misunderstanding Lincoln’s anti-slavery politics. Somehow Lincoln keeps eluding his admirers.

Stauffer writes about the Civil War era in ways that are at once up-to-the-minute and old-fashioned. In accord with the latest trends in the field of American Studies, he fixes on the emotional content of politics, with particular interest in friendships between black men and white men. His first book, *The Black Hearts of Men*, which served as a springboard for *Giants*, examined the connections and the activities of four uncompromising abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass and John Brown, who were brought together in the tiny and short-lived Radical Abolition Party in 1855. Stauffer was fascinated by their empathetic radicalism about race, which led one of the four, Gerrit Smith, who was also one of the richest men in the country, to declare that he would “make myself a colored man.”

A century before Norman Mailer’s “white negro,” there arose at the radical fringes of the anti-slavery movement, as Stauffer discovered, a highly racialized sense of righteousness in the name of eliminating racial hierarchy. (Stauffer summarized his quartet’s central belief, again in keeping with current humanistic usage, as the constructed “performative” self of an outsider: “The true spiritual heart was a black heart that shared a humanity with all people and lacked the airs of superiority of a white heart.”) One member of Stauffer’s group, the physician and literary critic James McCune Smith, who was the most highly educated black man in the country, called their sacred pursuits a form of “Bible Politics,” which Stauffer describes as the belief that “the

government of God and earthly states should be one and the same.” The Radical Abolitionists, in short, undertook a millennial flight from politics. This is completely recognizable to anyone familiar with the radical fringes of the late-1960s New Left, with its renunciation of “white skin privilege.” Stauffer prefers to see it as a kind of failed transcendence.

Not surprisingly, the effort ended badly—in violence and in insanity. Gerrit Smith, the party’s mainstay, temporarily lost his mind after authorities identified him as one of the chief conspirators supporting his fellow “colored man” John Brown, after Brown’s suicidal raid on Harpers Ferry in 1859. Once he had partially recovered, Smith decided that blacks truly were inferior to whites, and he endorsed colonization. One might easily conclude that Smith was drawn to extreme doctrines, noble and ignoble. Stauffer prefers psychology, speculating that Smith’s racist turn was his way “to exorcise his feelings of guilt” over the deaths of innocents at Harpers Ferry—and that thereby, tragically, Smith “lost his black heart.”

Stauffer’s sympathy for performative cross-racial self-fashioning as a strategy to destroy slavery and racial injustice is in tune with what is known as “whiteness studies” among cultural historians and critics. This approach construes race as the primary identity of consequence in American politics, and it construes “whiteness” as something tantamount to original sin. It also conflates politics with culture and psychology, which is yet another way to sound deeply political while evading politics and political history. More traditional, though, are Stauffer’s sympathies for the purity and the boldness of the radicals, in contrast to the moral flaccidity and the corruption of the world around them, including mainstream party politics. Those sympathies reappear in *Giants* and dominate its interpretations of Douglass and Lincoln.

THE IDEA OF pairing the two men has been much in the air over the last few years. The thesis of *Lincoln and Douglass: How a Revolutionary Black Leader and a Reluctant Liberator Struggled to End Slavery and Save the Union*, by the writers and amateur historians Paul Kendrick and Stephen Kendrick, which appeared in 2007, is pretty much summed up by its unwieldy subtitle. Lincoln, the white supremacist who hated slavery, began the Civil War aiming simply to save the Union, whereas Douglass, one of the only blacks Lincoln respected, held fast to his uncompromising abolitionism.

Yet the two formed a mutual understanding between 1863 and 1865, as Douglass's fiery speeches and writings helped to persuade Lincoln that the war could not be won without emancipation and the enlistment of black soldiers.

With far greater subtlety and historical understanding, James Oakes's *The Radical and the Republican*, which also appeared in 2007, traces how two very different men, following fundamentally different sets of political imperatives, eventually converged. One of the finest current scholars of the Civil War era, Oakes understands perfectly well that, however Lincoln viewed blacks, he had long hated slavery—with as much conviction, Oakes claims, as the radical ex-slave Douglass. Their differences had to do with their respective political positions. Douglass, the radical reformer, had no formal power, and could agitate as he pleased to proclaim his principles and persuade others. Lincoln had enormous power and enjoyed its possession, and accepted the mottled responsibilities of the presidency. Those duties, in his understanding, necessitated pragmatic compromise and negotiation in step with public opinion, as well as adherence to his official oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution. "It is important to democracy that reformers like Frederick Douglass could say what needed to be said," Oakes wisely observes, "but it is indispensable to democracy that politicians like Abraham Lincoln could do only what the law and the people allowed them to do." And, he might have added, it was indispensable for the nation, and above all the slaves, that Lincoln performed as president as well as he did.

Stauffer approaches Douglass and Lincoln, and defines his task, very differently. The ex-slave and the politician, he asserts, were oddly similar, despite the racial difference. Both were self-made men in the nineteenth-century American mold. Douglass escaped the vicious world of bondage and rose, through self-education and hard work, to become one of the greatest American orators and intellectuals of his time or any other. Lincoln escaped the vicious world of white rural poverty and rose, through self-education and hard work, to become one of the greatest American orators and intellectuals of his time or any other. As young men, they read many of the same books. Both turned to humor to overcome despair.

To be sure, Stauffer claims, Douglass "brilliantly exposed Lincoln's limitations as a champion of freedom." And this is

really the book's central argument: that once the sectional crisis began, Douglass, the fearless and uncompromising social revolutionary, by turns denounced and encouraged the anti-slavery conservative Republican Lincoln—and Lincoln finally saw the light. Stauffer also notes that the two men were able to put aside their political differences and become friends who "genuinely liked and admired each other." Douglass and Lincoln only met on three occasions, the last time fleetingly at a crowded East Room reception at the White House after Lincoln's second inauguration. There is abundant evidence, from 1863 through 1865, that they truly held each other in high mutual esteem; and Lincoln, during their second meeting as well as in the East Room, referred to Douglass as "my friend." This is enough to persuade Stauffer that he has located another rare but singularly important interracial friendship in antebellum America.

BUT CASTING that friendship in terms of the parallel lives of two "self-made" men is highly problematic. Stauffer gets a little puzzling about his definition of the term when at one point he calls Lincoln "the first self-made president"—raising questions about how he thinks the young Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, and Millard Fillmore made their way in the world. More important, self-made men, and men who considered themselves self-made, were ubiquitous in antebellum America. Millions of Americans shared Douglass's and Lincoln's belief in hard work and education as the keys to self-improvement. Frederick Douglass, by contrast, was one of only a handful of slaves who successfully escaped to freedom to become a self-made man. This distinction vitiates the superficial similarities between his life and Lincoln's—and that of any other white American. Stauffer nevertheless devotes the first part of his book to an examination of what he makes of the parallels. He departs most vigorously from the standard accounts by pushing hard what evidence he can muster about Douglass's and Lincoln's sexual lives and proclivities, and especially about what he imagines were their homoerotic tendencies.

Douglass lived through an unsatisfying marriage with another ex-slave, established prolonged extra-marital liaisons with at least two white women, and finally found connubial bliss late in life with a much younger woman, a former secretary, who also was white. He evinced no sexual desires at all for other

men. But Stauffer, the eager student of transgressive self-fashioning and all the rest, is on the lookout, and he brings up an incident in 1838 that fleetingly appears promising. Recently escaped from slavery, standing near the Tombs prison in New York City, and disguised in what looked like a sailors' outfit, Douglass was approached by a sailor named Stuart. The two struck up a conversation, in what Stauffer says "seemed almost like a pickup." In the end, though, Stauffer admits, "the pickup stemmed more from sympathy than any desire for sex," and he drops the story.

Lincoln is another matter. Since Carl Sandburg wrote of the "streak of lavender" that he detected in Lincoln, there has been speculation about Lincoln's affection for men, and Stauffer is determined to give it one more whirl. He notes an intellectual debt to C. A. Tripp's *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, a discredited hodgepodge of supposition and deception, which appeared in 2003, though he does not endorse Tripp's sensational claim that Lincoln was "predominantly homosexual." Stauffer favors the more diffuse argument, adapted from Foucault and now generally accepted in the academy, that until the words "homosexuality" and "heterosexuality" were invented (some say in 1868, others in 1886 or 1892), sexual love between men was a repertory of acts and not a trait of personality. In America, so the argument goes, sexuality was much more polymorphous before the Civil War than after. Yet if Stauffer sees the antebellum sexual universe as, in his words, "very blurry indeed," he is adamant about one thing: "Lincoln's soul mate and the love of his life was a man named Joshua Speed."

Stauffer's rehearsal of the old Speed story illustrates the difference between a historian and a professor with an agenda. Joshua Speed was a young storeowner and the son of a wealthy Kentucky planter. Between 1837 and 1841, he roomed with Lincoln above Speed's store in Springfield. As was then the custom, they shared a bed ("a very large double-bed," Speed later recalled); and they became, according to numerous accounts, intimate friends, confessing to each other their hopes, fears, and ambitions, while musing aloud and gossiping about politics and (especially) literature. Stauffer works hard to suggest that what he calls this "romantic friendship" included loving sexual contact. As evidence, he presents a mish-mash of strained analogies and literary references (including, inevitably, Ishmael and Queequeg) as somehow telling. He notes that "male-male sex

was also common in the military.” He dismisses as “rhetorical gymnastics” David Herbert Donald’s detailed denial of homoeroticism in Lincoln’s and Speed’s friendship. And so he concludes that “there is no reason to suppose that [Lincoln] didn’t also have carnal relations with Joshua Speed.”

The trouble is there is no reason to suppose that they did. Speed’s letters to Lincoln during the years in question, Stauffer records, “have sadly been lost”; but Lincoln’s letters to Speed betray no signs of any passion or romance, let alone a sexual bond, apart from some pledges of undying friendship. (Lincoln did, as Stauffer notes, close one letter to Speed “Yours forever”—but Donald pointed out that Lincoln used the same phrase in letters to his law partner and an Illinois congressman.) As Stauffer does not bring Lincoln’s sexuality to bear either on his relations to Douglass or on any other later aspect of his life, including his marriage, it is difficult to see why the Speed story arises at all, especially given how fragmentary the evidence is. It is also difficult to understand why Stauffer would devote so much time and space to the imputation of a profound homoeroticism that, by his own admission, cannot be proved, at least with the available documentation.

THE REMAINDER of *Giants* amounts to a variation on the familiar left-populist arguments about Lincoln—whom Stauffer repeatedly derides as a conservative, deeply reluctant about undertaking emancipation—and how circumstances repeatedly forced him into the kind of greatness that Douglass exemplified. Stauffer’s account, though, is almost completely devoid of politics, except in trying to make Douglass and the radicals look brilliant, and Lincoln either begrudging or benighted. This approach flattens crucial complexities, and badly misrepresents Lincoln’s politics and his ideas. The confusion is particularly severe when Stauffer considers constitutional issues, beginning with the Supreme Court’s pro-slavery ruling in the *Dred Scott* case in 1857.

According to Stauffer, Lincoln, prior to *Dred Scott*, believed in the absolute supremacy of the court as the final arbiter of all constitutional issues. (He supports this assertion with an ambiguous quotation from a campaign speech by Lincoln in 1856, as well as extraneous quotations that turn out to be not from Lincoln at all but from Tocqueville and John Marshall.) But Chief Justice Taney’s ruling in *Dred Scott*, Stauffer claims, changed

everything. By opposing the decision, Stauffer writes, Lincoln “rejected the Court as the nation’s supreme authority,” redoubled his support for the non-extension of slavery which flew in the face of that decision, and suddenly began to rely “on a natural (or ‘higher’ law) and follow the path that Frederick Douglass had long ago taken.” Lincoln the lawyer now “repudiated the Constitution and legal precedent and defined the Declaration [of Independence] to be the centerpiece of government.” Not for the first time, and not for the last, in Stauffer’s telling, Lincoln belatedly approached Douglass’s principled position.

This is nonsense. Of course Lincoln believed and had long insisted that the federal courts must be obeyed. Yet when, in 1856, he asserted that the Supreme Court was the proper body to decide constitutional issues, and that he would abide by the court’s decisions, he did not say that all its decisions were absolutely settled law (let alone what he called “well-settled” law), or that abiding by those decisions ruled out seeking their undoing. The *Dred Scott* decision certainly moved Lincoln to clarify his thinking about the legitimacy of Supreme Court decisions, to himself as well as to the public—but contrary to Stauffer, Lincoln rejected the *Dred Scott* ruling not because he thought it violated a “higher law,” but because he thought it was erroneous and unconstitutional (as well as unjust), and he called for constitutional and democratic action to overturn it. “We know the court that made it has often over-ruled its own decisions,” Lincoln declared, “and we shall do what we can to have it over-rule this.”

Lincoln hardly “repudiated” the Constitution. (Stauffer shamelessly constructs this contention by quoting, out of context, bits of Lincoln’s writings from well before the *Dred Scott* ruling, dating back as far as 1854.) Lincoln repudiated the Taney Court’s interpretation of the Constitution as flagrantly unsound. The best way to remedy the situation, he believed, would be to hold fast to the anti-slavery principles that Chief Justice Taney had wrongly declared unconstitutional, and elect officials (including a president and a Senate majority) who would uphold accurate constitutional interpretation. Once in office, those men would legislate and execute accordingly, and start to change the composition of the court, and finally succeed in overturning *Dred Scott*.

This was the democratic political path that Lincoln took (which eventually led him to the presidency), at the very moment when Douglass and the “black hearts” of the erstwhile Radical Abolition

Party were pondering illegal violence in the name of a “higher law,” including violence directed against the federal government. The difference between them was not small, nor was Lincoln’s constitutional reasoning abstruse. The great mass of American citizens understood the difference (even if southern pro-slavery extremists tried to equate Lincoln’s views with the radicals). But Stauffer does not take the time to understand elementary historical and political distinctions.

Stauffer’s readings of other basic constitutional and political facts repeatedly diminish Lincoln by turning him into a craven compromiser and worse. This is precisely the caricature of him that was cultivated by radical Republicans and abolitionists. Stauffer endorses Douglass’s denunciation of Lincoln’s First Inaugural Address as “double-tongued”; and he likewise endorses what he calls Douglass’s view that, by appealing to the South for reconciliation, Lincoln cruelly “ignored the cries of blacks in chains.” Stauffer might have paused to remember that, on March 4, 1861, when Lincoln was inaugurated, the war had not yet begun. Lincoln’s bid for reconciliation was a politically crafted way of giving the South a chance to renounce secession and recognize the legitimacy of his own election—and the legitimacy of a national government now dominated by a duly elected anti-slavery Republican Party. It is understandable that the radical abolitionist Douglass reacted to Lincoln’s speech with a harsh polemic. But for a scholar to say that Lincoln callously “sacrificed the humanity of blacks” is a purposeful distortion of his political circumstances and intentions.

Lincoln’s address did give tepid, provisional backing to a constitutional amendment that had passed Congress and that would have prohibited any future amendment banning slavery in the states where it existed. At first, the incoming president opposed the idea as needless conciliation. But as Lincoln

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believed, like most Americans, that Congress already lacked the power to ban slavery in the states, he also construed the amendment as an unthreatening effort to make explicit a provision which was, he said, “now implied constitutional law.” In any event, he believed, quite soundly, that the amendment did nothing to interfere with his bedrock conviction about Congress’s power to halt the spread of slavery, and thereby to commence its elimination. But Stauffer, horrified, misdescribes the proposal flatly as “an *unamendable* amendment guaranteeing slavery in the states *forever*,” and falsely charges that Lincoln’s “intellectually and morally dishonest” stance “negated his belief in the ‘ultimate extinction of slavery.’” He then paraphrases, in apparent agreement, Douglass’s wild charge that as soon as Lincoln made this concession the “nickname ‘Honest Abe’ sank into the sewers of Washington.”

Stauffer, like Gates, does allow that President Lincoln eventually enlarged his anti-slavery convictions. Yet also like Gates—and in line with the rest of the “two Lincolns” literature—he sometimes explains that development in terms of some sort of individual apotheosis or emotional awakening, once again devoid of politics. Concerning Lincoln’s eventual decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, Stauffer offers the far-fetched assertion that Lincoln “experienced the equivalent of a conversion” that may have started with Willie’s death in February 1862. “Perhaps Willie’s death fueled Lincoln’s sympathies for parents throughout the North who had lost a son.... The need to emancipate the slaves *in order* to save the Union weighed upon Lincoln, a heavy burden.” No historian doubts that Lincoln was haunted by death and deeply moved by the war’s carnage, or that he underwent what he called “a process of crystallization,” in his thinking about religion between 1862 and 1865 (although there is no evidence that he ever became a believing Christian). But the idea that sentimental or religious feelings motivated Lincoln’s evolving views about so crucial and hazardous an issue as emancipation is sheer fantasy.

On the black recruitment issue, Stauffer rehearses Lincoln’s revocation of General Hunter’s emancipation order without mentioning the encouragement that the administration gave Hunter to enlist black troops. Nor does he go into detail about the administration’s later orders to General Saxton to pick up where Hunter had left off (an episode he does at least mention, albeit in an entirely different context, in the book’s prologue).

Instead, Stauffer says that the conservative and overcautious Lincoln stifled Hunter’s emancipation decree in order to preserve stability, insisting as ever on “gradual change” even when much of the Republican party press had come to favor “social revolution.” According to Stauffer, the Hunter episode—indeed, the entire story of the politics that led to the Emancipation Proclamation, including its black recruitment provision—offers yet another example of Lincoln finally catching up to the wisdom of Frederick Douglass and the radicals. But the fact is that there is only one slight example of Douglass directly affecting any of Lincoln’s decisions about conducting the war, and even that example is debatable. It occurred in 1864, late in the war, during the second of their three meetings.

VIII.

LINCOLN AND DOUGLASS first met in August 1863, when Douglass came to the White House to register various complaints about the mistreatment of black soldiers. The president quickly impressed the radical by making a fuss over him (which, given the racial implications, meant a great deal to Douglass) and by otherwise handling the situation like a master politician. Instead of expressing anger or affecting condescension over Douglass’s attacks on him, Lincoln calmly listened to Douglass’s concerns about the administration’s tardiness, explained his own position about the need sometimes to go slowly, and forthrightly insisted that he had never vacillated on emancipation or any other important decision. (Lincoln also endorsed, with his own signature, an official pass through Union lines issued to Douglass earlier in the day by Secretary of War Stanton. The pass came with a promise from Stanton, which delighted Douglass, of a formal commission to aid in the raising of black troops in Mississippi.)

Having come to Washington full of grievances, Douglass departed smitten by Lincoln, writing that the “wise, great, and eloquent” president would “go down to posterity, if the nation is saved, as Honest Abraham.” Even when Douglass’s promised Mississippi commission never actually materialized, the disappointed Douglass refused to blame the president. Having met the man, he was now persuaded that his anxieties about what he regarded as Lincoln’s equivocations about slavery and freedom had been misplaced. But Lincoln had conceded nothing.

A year later Lincoln was in deep political trouble, and he invited Douglass,

whose enthusiasm for the president had waned, to confer with him at the White House—their second meeting. Earlier in the year, radical Republicans, seeking a candidate committed to their agenda concerning possible postwar reconstruction plans, tried to deny Lincoln re-nomination and replace him with John C. Frémont. Douglass, returning to his earlier criticisms of the president, backed Frémont and his radical program, which Stauffer, recalling his earlier book, likens to the Radical Abolition Party platform of 1855. It was, Stauffer observes favorably, a firm rebuke of what he derides as Lincoln’s “misguided policies.”

Lincoln handily fended off the radicals and won re-nomination in early July. The main threat now came from the Democrats, who, along with some skittish moderate Republicans, were calling for a negotiated peace with the Confederacy. Lincoln released a public letter stating that he could no longer consider restoring the Union unless the slaves were emancipated, which pleased some of the radicals but further riled the opposition. Lincoln next considered issuing a second letter in order to clarify his position and openly recognize that public opinion prevented him from ever fighting the war purely in order to achieve abolition. He began the second meeting with Douglass by asking him if he should release this second letter. Douglass, not surprisingly, said no. Lincoln laid the letter aside for good, which may have been Douglass’s most direct contribution of consequence in the war—although it is also possible that Lincoln had made his decision before he met with Douglass, and was simply trying to make the radical feel important.

Lincoln wanted more out of the meeting. He told Douglass that the slaves were not flocking to Union lines as quickly as he had hoped, and he asked Douglass to undertake a new assignment: devising some means to spread the word of emancipation to the slaves on the plantations. Douglass was stunned that Lincoln would approve of what looked to him like inciting a slave uprising—a move that he deemed similar to John Brown’s outrageous plot a few years earlier. Douglass eagerly agreed to come up with a proposal, and quickly went to work on drafting specifics.

In fact, apart from its ultimate goal of liberating slaves, Lincoln’s proposal was exactly the opposite of John Brown’s crusade. Brown, mistrustful of mainstream politics and politicians, aimed to overthrow slavery by first seizing the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, which was a mission doomed from the start. Lin-

coln, a wily politician and the president of the very government that Brown had attacked, was using his full force as commander-in-chief to impose emancipation on southern rebels, which was a mission with a reasonable chance of some success. Still, it made no difference to Lincoln that Douglass was deluding himself into thinking that he was re-enacting Brown's revolution—just so long the radical worked with him on emancipation and remained loyal to him in a dismal political season.

General Sherman's victory at Atlanta several weeks later dramatically changed the political as well as the military situation, helping lift Lincoln to re-election while rendering it unnecessary to take special measures to encourage the slaves to flee to Union lines. Once again, an administration offer to enlist Douglass came to nothing. But Douglass was greatly relieved, persuaded now more than ever that Lincoln was not just a personal friend but a true friend to his people. Only weeks before, Douglass had ridiculed the president as an unprincipled politician who had to be forced by circumstances to do the right thing. Now he considered Lincoln's re-election imperative, having seen in him "a deeper moral conviction against slavery than I had ever seen before in anything spoken or written by him." *Here is the conversion story: the conversion of Frederick Douglass into a believer in Abraham Lincoln. It had required no divine intervention, only Lincoln's sincerity and political skill.*

Less than seven months later, Douglass and Lincoln met for the last time. Approaching the White House reception following Lincoln's second inauguration, Douglass found his entrance barred by guards who claimed that they had been told "to admit no persons of color." But after Lincoln was alerted, Douglass gained admission. "Here comes my friend Douglass," exclaimed Lincoln, who took him by the hand and asked him what he had thought of his speech earlier in the day, insisting (or so Douglass proudly recounted) that "there is no man in the country whose opinion I value more than yours." Douglass replied that he thought it had been "a sacred effort," and Lincoln said he was glad to hear it. Douglass then returned to his home in Rochester, New York deeply honored—just as anyone, he later wrote, "would regard himself honored by such expressions, from such a man." Six weeks later

Lincoln was dead. To the grief-stricken Douglass, as for countless others, Lincoln had become something like America's Christ, whose martyrdom, he said, "will be the salvation of our country," by uniting blacks and whites in reconciliation. It was not to be.

DOUGHGLASS OUTLIVED Lincoln by thirty years, which leaves Stauffer with a good deal of ground to cover without his gimmick of parallel lives. Interestingly, though, Stauffer finds a parallel, although he may not have realized that he has done so. Many historians have offered an exaggerated "two Lincolns" interpretation of the president, but now Stauffer, who presents his own ver-



1863

sion of the "two Lincolns" story, comes up with what might be called a "two Douglasses" interpretation. The chief difference is that although the historians (and Stauffer) claim that Lincoln changed from bad to good, Stauffer argues that Douglass changed from good to bad.

According to Stauffer, the years of Reconstruction after 1865, and Reconstruction's eventual failure, coincided with Douglass's increasing quietude. "Like most other black and white abolitionists," he remarks, "Douglass saw the end of the war as the endpoint of an era and of his life's work." The intrepid radical became a Republican Party loyalist. (For black Americans, Douglass would say, there was a simple rule in electoral politics:

"The Republican Party is the ship, all else is the sea.") But Douglass, in Stauffer's account, also became fixed in the past, once Congress had beaten back the reactionary presidency of Andrew Johnson. Having "declared victory," Stauffer writes, President Ulysses S. Grant and other Republican leaders turned "a blind eye" to the murder and terror by former Confederates that eventually destroyed Reconstruction. "So too did Douglass," Stauffer argues, noting Douglass's increasingly comfortable economic circumstances, his appointment to party patronage positions—and, not least, his failure to recognize "the new outrages [being] perpetrated against blacks" in his famous speech about Lincoln in 1876.

Stauffer concludes his book with an anecdote about Douglass in 1895, just before his death. A young black student asked the old eminence for advice about what Negroes just starting out ought to be thinking about doing: "Agitate! Agitate! Agitate!" Douglass proclaimed, with all the might he had left in him. Yet Stauffer also leaves the impression that Douglass was for the most part a burned-out case for the last thirty years of his life, a black bourgeois Republican blind to the poverty of the mass of blacks—like "a retired athlete or political leader ... unable to reenter the fray with the same passion and in the same way." In this way, Stauffer remarks, Douglass's politics came ironically to resemble Lincoln's in their "gradual and comparatively conservative approach to reform." The former radical giant had shriveled: "Not once in the postwar period did Douglass endorse extra-legal means to end oppression."

Stauffer's blanket condemnation of Republicans such as Grant for turning their backs on southern blacks is, at the very least, unfair. As Stauffer himself notes, Grant, as president, crushed the Ku Klux Klan in 1871. He might also have mentioned Grant's support for the successful ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, and for the full range of the enforcement acts that he signed in 1870 and 1871, and for the Civil Rights Act of 1875—taken together, the strongest civil rights record of any president between Abraham Lincoln and Lyndon B. Johnson. Even after the economic panic of 1873 and a Democratic resurgence in the midterm elections of 1874 sharply reduced his options, Grant remained committed to enforcing the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, and doing what he could to protect Unionists and freedmen in the South.

Stauffer's portrait of Douglass after the war is perverse. Even as the Republican Party's support for Reconstruction receded in the mid-1870s, Douglass remained firmly committed to using the ballot box as the central instrument for advancing southern black interests. When, in the 1880s and 1890s, black disenfranchisement spread throughout the former Confederacy, Douglass raised his voice in fierce indignation, denouncing the "suppression of the legal vote in the south" as a "national problem," "as much a problem for Maine and Massachusetts as it is for the Carolinas and Georgia." He went so far as to declare, in 1888, that the emancipation intended by Lincoln had not actually come to pass—and that the Negro in the South was "worse off, in many ways, than when he was a slave."

Douglass in his later years did indeed become more like Lincoln—not because he turned "conservative," but because he came to recognize, as Lincoln did almost instinctively, the difference between the role of a radical reformer and the role of a politician. He arrived at a moral and historical appreciation of politics. James Oakes puts it well: "[Douglass] did not claim that the abolitionist perspective was invalid, only that it was partial and therefore inadequate. Lincoln was an elected official, a politician, not a reformer; he was responsible to a broad public that no abolitionist crusader had to worry about." Douglass, that is, had grown wiser, and had come to see politics as more complex than he had before the war. It is a kind of wisdom lost on political moralists of all generations, for whom radical reform is the ship, and virtually everything else is a corrupting bog of compromise.

Without an appreciation of this complexity, it becomes easy to view Douglass as a backslider, just as it is easy to see Lincoln as a hopelessly cautious politician—or, as Stauffer puts it, a "conservative"—who only began to transcend politics in 1862 or 1863. In fact, it was Lincoln's pragmatic, at times cynical, but always practical insistence on *not* transcending politics that enabled him, as Douglass put it in 1876 (in the passage that Gates finds puzzling), to restore the Union and "free his country from the great crime of slavery." Achieving either of those great ends, as Douglass finally understood, required the sympathy

and the cooperation of Lincoln's "loyal fellow-countrymen." Putting "the abolition of slavery before the salvation of the Union," Douglass observed, would have "rendered resistance to rebellion impossible." Had Lincoln truly been the radical that Stauffer would have preferred, the slaveholders likely would have won the Civil War.

IX.

THE ADAGE THAT understanding history requires understanding the historian also applies to literary critics trying to write history. Despite their differences in methods and conclusions, much of the new wave of books on Lincoln reflects a common mood among a portion of the liberal intelligentsia, one that cannot be ascribed simply to Lincoln's bicentennial. The mood might seem political, but this is imprecise: it cares about politics only so as to demote it and repudiate it and transcend it. The mood to which I refer is in truth profoundly anti-political. It runs deeper than conventional election loyalties, touching what has become a

ganglion of contemporary liberal hopes and dreams about America, about its past, its present, and its future.

One would have to be blind not to see all the connections that bind this mood and the new Lincoln boom to the rise of Barack Obama. President Obama hardly created the mood. Although he wrote admiringly about Lincoln before he ran for the presidency, all these new books on Lincoln were in the works long before Obama's presidential prospects were very plausible. Along the way, though, the idealizations of Obama and Lincoln became tightly entwined, in support of an almost cultish enthusiasm—humorously, but unironically, illustrated by the ubiquitous Photoshop image that blended portraits of the two men into a single Abe-bama. The excitement of the campaign certainly had something to do with the linkage, as did pointed references by Obama to Lincoln on the stump—but liberal intellectuals eagerly validated it. And some of the books written to coincide with Lincoln's bicentennial went to press just in time to lend the linkage additional credibility.

The Lincoln Anthology concludes with a long excerpt from Obama's announcement of his candidacy in 2007 in Springfield, and suggests that the speech marks the fulfillment of Lincoln's aspirations and achievements. Stauffer's book, which was published on Election Day last year, carries as its epigraph a passage from *The Audacity of Hope*, in which Obama praises Lincoln for his combination of humility and activism, and cites Douglass to the effect that power concedes nothing without a fight. Gates's introduction, which reached the printers just after the election, mentions Obama three times, ending with an evocation of the president as the black man who, nearly a century and a half after the Emancipation Proclamation, fulfilled Lincoln's legacy.

Like any group of able politicians, Obama and his strategists exploited the mood by hyping their Lincoln connections, real and imagined—right down to agreeing to have the new president sit down to a celebratory post-inaugural lunch consisting of dishes that President Lincoln himself enjoyed. This is not a mystic chord of memory. It is branding. But the mood is bigger than the man, and Obama can be no more blamed for succumbing to it, or

Lists—III

The date's a sentence that can be parsed: pattern, symmetry, sequence. Can I parse the sky this morning, its complex syntax of cirrocumulus suggestions? The sunlight's breaking, broken. Light on the hills is thinner than yesterday's illumination. The flooding creek is still out of its banks, but lower. An impulse to measure, mark: the river the rain the times of sunrise sunset. I don't know how to take in the fact that we are at war: overreaching, aggressor, outlaw. In the garden snowdrops and trash, hyacinth heads pushing up like green tops of wooden newels, elaborately carved. Bleeding heart, rhubarb are purple and red punctuation: commas, parentheses, stops. Day is a sharp break from dream, a door shutting. If I had to invent what I dreamt, I'd say mothering and the Antipodes. April's forecast is rain, surges of heat and cold: weather tempered to my own. I know what I'm ignoring, what I don't want to know. I'm appalled, ashamed. Spring doesn't give a damn. Overnight robins arrive, fat and bold and omnipresent. Lilac, dogwood in bud, crocus blooming, the shell-shaped leaves of columbine splay out over moldy oak leaves, dead grass. Under the stalks of last year's sedum, this year's leaves are curled, tight green cabbage roses, potent, oblivious.

SANDRA KOHLER

for trying to turn its symbolism to his own advantage, than Lincoln can be faulted for his own political maneuvering. Our president is hardly the innocent that he tries to appear to be, but it is precisely his intensely political character, the political cunning that lies behind all his “transcendence” of politics, that makes him Lincolnian; and it comes as a great relief from the un-Lincolnian sanctimony that surrounds his image.

Historically considered, the Obama phenomenon batted on the high-minded Mugwump disdain for “politics as usual” that has become such a central feature of contemporary left-liberalism—and which, in a twisted way, has become associated with the iconic Lincoln. Two of the major objects of enmity in this current of reformism are the political parties (with their dark hidden forces, the professional politicians) and the money-drenched system of campaigning (with its dark hidden forces, the corporate donors). If only the hammerlock of the two major parties—or, alternatively, that of the bosses within each party—can be broken, the true will of the rank and file, and ultimately of the people, will be unleashed, and principled government will be restored. And if the intrinsically corrupting (or so it is claimed) contributions of big money are ended, and something approximating public financing of elections installed in its place, then something closer to Lincolnian government of the people, by the people, and for the people will emerge. Right?

The Obama campaign, with its talk of repudiating politics as usual and creating a new post-partisan era in Washington, and with its liturgical incantations of “change” and “hope,” aroused liberal anti-politics to a fever pitch. The above-politics talk also appears to have played a major role in winning Obama favor with the political press and the intellectuals, as well as with many more Americans (including not a few libertarian Republicans) for whom “politics” means “dirty politics.” Some obvious ironies, though, have gone undiscussed. Obama ran up his early lead in the pledged delegate count during the primaries chiefly because of his victories in state party caucuses, a system of selection that is seriously skewed against working people and older voters, and that, with its viva voce voting and arcane rules, is singularly vulnerable to blatant manipulation. Obama then secured the nomination in June 2008 when he won over the party’s so-called “super-delegates.”

In the general election, Obama, although pledged to accept public cam-

paign financing, changed his mind, having gained an enormous war chest by gathering small donations through the Internet, but also through more old-fashioned methods of big-money political fundraising. (About half his funds were accumulated in the old unimpeccable way.) All of this, including his maneuvering through the primaries, was fair and square—and, from the viewpoint of any professional politician, very impressive. But there was also something, well, rich about the candidate beloved by the good-government reformers relying on the party insiders to get nominated and rejecting public financing in order to get elected.

The intellectuals’ rapture over Obama, their eagerness to align him with their beatified Lincoln, has grown out of a deep hunger for a liberal savior, the likes of which the nation has not seen since the death of Robert Kennedy in 1968. The eight years of George W. Bush’s presidency only deepened the hunger; and last year it overtook a new generation of voters as well who, though born long after 1968, yearned for smart, articulate, principled liberal leadership. Along came Obama who, despite his inexperience—or, perhaps, because of it: he seemed so uncontaminated by the arts that he practiced—fit the bill, his African heritage doing more to help him by galvanizing white liberals and African Americans. Although Obama’s supporters at times likened him to the two Kennedys, and at times to FDR, the comparisons always came back to Lincoln—with the tall, skinny, well-spoken Great Emancipator from Illinois serving as the spiritual forebear of the tall, skinny, well-spoken great liberal hope from Illinois.

THE DANGER WITH the comparison does not have too much to do with the real Barack Obama, whose reputation will stand or fall on whether he succeeds or fails in the White House. The danger is with how we understand our politics, and our political history, and Abraham Lincoln. That the election of an African American to the presidency brings Lincoln to mind is only natural. But the hunger pangs of some liberals have caused them to hallucinate. Obama’s legendary announcement in Springfield was the purest political stagecraft, but it was happily regarded as a kind of message from history. One hears that Obama, like Lincoln, is a self-made man—but Lincoln, unlike Obama, started out in life dirt poor, and lacked any opportunity to attend an elite private high school and then earn degrees

at Columbia College and Harvard Law School. One hears that the rhetoric that carried Obama to the White House is Lincolnian, which it most certainly is not, either in its imagery or its prosody. One hears even that Obama is not just an extremely talented and promising new president but, as Henry Louis Gates Jr. writes, that he is “destined”—destined!—“to be thought of as Lincoln’s direct heir.”

Who does not wish Obama well? But such hallucinations make it difficult for historians to keep the intricacies of political history front and center, or to acknowledge Lincoln’s peculiar gifts as a political leader and a political president. It would appear that those intricacies and those gifts need to be salvaged from the mythologizing and aestheticizing glorifications, from populist fantasies born of forty years of liberal frustration. Lincoln himself might have understood the problem, given his familiarity, inside the Whig Party of the 1830s and 1840s, with powerful anti-party and anti-political sentiments that foreshadowed the Mugwump mentality of the Gilded Age.

As a state legislator in 1837, Lincoln rose to object to a Democratic resolution on the Illinois State Bank—and, it seemed at first, to attack the very profession of politics. “Mr. Chairman,” he said, “this movement is exclusively the work of politicians; a set of men who have interests aside from the interests of the people, and who, to say the most of them are, taken as a mass, at least one long step removed from being honest men.” But then he threw in his kicker: “I say this with greater freedom because, being a politician myself, none can regard it as personal.”

The candor of Lincoln’s language, the ease with which he accurately describes his real vocation, is refreshing. He saw no shame in the practice of politics, and experienced no priggish discomfort about what it takes to get great things done. He was never too good for politics. Quite the contrary: for him, politics—ordinary, grimy, unelevating politics—was itself a good, and an instrument for good. Lincoln knew who he was. He knew that his colleagues knew who he was. He would never renounce who he was. It would take the earnest liberal writers of a later age to do that for him—or, taking him at his word, to slight his eventual achievements while vaunting their own radical heroes. In misunderstanding Abraham Lincoln, these writers misunderstand American democratic politics, in Lincoln’s day as well as in our own. ♦

The Long Arc

ON A RAINY DAY in 1993, I sat with my parents at the opening ceremonies of the Holocaust Museum and heard President Clinton, who was doing nothing to stop the genocide in Bosnia, suggest that the genocide in Bosnia must be stopped, because never again can we allow genocide to occur. My mother laconically whispered that “he talks about Bosnia as if he is somebody else.” I was reminded of her distinction between the president and the rest of us when I read a piece on this magazine’s website by my *haver* Michael Walzer, who made the same distinction but for the opposite end. He wished to exonerate the president. His subject was President Obama’s stony reluctance to condemn the Iranian regime’s theft of the election and its repression in the streets. “What Obama says must be guided by what he has to do,” Walzer wrote, referring to the challenge of the nuclearization of Iran. “The rest of us are much freer.” And so “we need to be clear about who we are and what we stand for and why we oppose the religious zealots and tyrants who have ruled Iran for the last decades.” But the president need express, or teach, no such clarity. “Heads of state,” who can “defend political principles” if they wish, “have other things to do.” This was the stirring slogan of Walzer’s exemption of the president from moral leadership in the midst of one of the greatest explosions of democratic energy in our time: “For liberals and leftists—opposition and nothing else; for state diplomats—handshakes and negotiations.”

MARCH, FOR THAT? I admit that the condition of the American left matters less to me than the condition of the Iranian resistance. And Walzer was hardly the only liberal making bleak excuses for Obama’s zealous refusal to show any zeal. We shall not be moved, indeed. But Walzer got it exactly backward. If all of us support the dissidents but the president does not, the dissidents have an American problem. If none of us support the dissidents but the president does,

the dissidents do not have an American problem. And either way, the president is “meddling.” Obama’s parsimonious performance in the first weeks of the rebellion in Tehran, the disappearance of his eloquence and his championship of change, was an attempt by the president to impersonate the rest of us, to be just another saddened consumer of tweets and feeds. Hence his refrains about “bearing witness” and “the world is watching.” That is uplift for a demonstration, or a vigil. Witnessing and watching are varieties of passivity. The rest of us witness and watch, because we can do little else. (Hitting “send” is not a muscular form of political action.) Obama seems to think that there is some force in the admonition that the world is watching; but history plentifully demonstrates that when the world is watching, all the world does is watch. His worst moment came when he hid behind Martin Luther King, Jr.: “What we can do is bear witness and say to the world that the incredible demonstrations that we’ve seen is a testimony to—I think what Dr. King called the arc of the moral universe. It’s long but it bends towards justice.” The president was counseling patience, and it always looks so unwise, so impetuous, to be against patience. But King was not patient with injustice. And when it came to his own campaign, to his own hunger, Obama did not cite King on the long arc of justice. He cited King on the fierce urgency of now.

WITH THEIR DEFENSE of Obama’s dilatoriness about the revolt in Tehran, American liberals compromised themselves. They succumbed to the Council on Foreign Relations view of the world. So it is important to be clear that the strong articulation of American principles by the American president when those principles are being bravely upheld by a people in revolt against a dictator—this is not only a statement of emotion, it is also an element of strategy. It emboldens the right side. It allies the United States with peoples against regimes, which is almost always the surest foundation for the American position. (I am

not an Iran expert, unlike almost everyone I meet, but I find it hard to imagine that the young men and women suffering the blows of the Basij would not welcome our support, that they are in the streets with angry thoughts of Mossadegh. If these events have shown anything, it is that their enemy and our enemy are the same.) There is nothing more sweepingly in the interest of the United States in the Middle East than the withering away of the theocracy in Iran. Every blow struck against the structure of state power in Iran is a blow struck against Hezbollah and Hamas; and a blow has at last been struck. This is one of those instances in which our planners may have some use for our principles. I understand the urgency of the nuclear issue, of course. I doubt that those centrifuges will be negotiated away; but if there is any hope for diplomacy, it lies in a political transformation in Tehran.

I DO NOT AGREE that Obama’s diffidence about liberation and human rights is owed entirely to a fear of nuclear proliferation. He has another commitment. He is determined to be the un-ugly American. This excites him. He is consecrated to an engagement with the Muslim world, which is not entirely consistent with a consecration to democracy. Even as the brutality of the ayatollahs was increasing, Obama made a point of referring graciously to “the Islamic Republic of Iran,” as if it would be a slander against Islam or Iran to refer to the regime in a less legitimating manner. (The commentators are declaring a “crisis of legitimacy” in Iran, but there can be no crisis of legitimacy where there is no legitimacy.) Why does Obama care so much for Khamenei’s good opinion? Khamenei will blame the West whatever the West does, because he believes that the West is forever to blame. Khamenei responded to Obama’s rap- ture in Cairo with *this*. And soon, if he is to act according to his plan, Obama will have to sit down with Ahmadinejad. Perhaps he will shake his hand. Perhaps he will wear a green tie. There are many ways for an American to be ugly or un-ugly. The hearts of millions are about to be broken. They will look to the president of the United States. Will his mincing cease? Will the realist get real? In recent days Obama has begun—not under pressure, of course—to “condemn” and to “deplore.” The oppressed people of Iran may now endure what other oppressed peoples have endured: the learning curve of an American president. It is the insult that history adds to their injury.

LEON WIESELTIER

You deserve a factual look at . . .

The Deadly Threat of a Nuclear-Armed Iran

What can the world, what can the USA, what can Israel do about it?

Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has declared publicly – not once, but repeatedly – that Israel must be “wiped off the map.” That effort, the destruction of Israel, seems to be the main goal of Iranian policy. When Iranian missiles are paraded through the streets of Tehran, the destination “to Jerusalem” is clearly stenciled on them.

What are the facts?

A death wish for Israel. Ahmadinejad and the ayatollah who is the “supreme leader” have publicly mused that one or two nuclear bombs would obliterate Israel, but that, though it would cause devastating damage and millions of casualties, Iran would survive Israel's retaliatory attack. Iran is a huge country, with about 60 million inhabitants, so they are probably correct. And who can doubt that those religious fanatics would not hesitate to allow the destruction of much of their country and to sacrifice a third or even one-half of their population in order to eliminate the hated Jewish state? When our country was entangled with the Soviet Union in the bitter 40-year long “cold war,” with both sides having sufficient nuclear weapons to destroy the opponent's country and its people, things were kept in place by MAD – Mutually Assured Destruction. However “evil” the leaders of the Soviet Union (the “Evil Empire”) may have been, there was one great consolation and assurance: They were not crazy. But the Iranians and other Muslims are crazies, as we understand the concept. Because they take instructions directly from Allah, who tells them to kill the Jews and other infidels, whatever the cost.

Israel has no problem with Iran. They share no borders and have no territorial dispute. In fact, they face common Arab enemies and should be natural allies, as they indeed were under the Shah. Iran's death wish for Israel is based entirely on religious fanaticism. In contrast even to the intractable North Koreans, the determination of the Iranians is immutable. It cannot be changed by persuasion, by diplomacy, by sanctions or by threats.

Once Iran is in possession of nuclear weapons, it will not only be a deadly danger to Israel, but to all of the Middle East and to virtually all of Europe. The flow of oil from the Middle East, the lifeblood of the industrialized world, would be totally under its control and so would be the economies of all nations of the world, very much including the United States.

What is to be done? In 1981, then prime minister of Israel Menachem Begin, being aware of Iraq's nuclear ambitions and looming realization of those ambitions, decided that its nuclear reactor at Osirak had to be destroyed. The IAF (Israeli Air Force)

accomplished that in a daring and unprecedented raid. Iraq's nuclear capability was eliminated in one stroke, never to rise up again. Israel had done the world an enormous service. Had it not been for Israel's decisive action, the Iraqi conquest of Kuwait and, without question, also of Saudi Arabia and its enormous oil fields, and, for that matter, of Iran, could not have been prevented. Saddam Hussein would have been the ruler of the world.

The solution to the deadly threat that Iran poses to the world is obvious. Of course, diplomacy and persuasion, threats and promises, sticks and carrots – every possible means short of military action – should be used until it becomes clear even to the most obtuse that nothing can deviate Iran from its chosen path of becoming a nuclear power and to dominate the Middle East.

There is reason to believe that the people of Iran, especially the young people, oppose the oppressive and theocratic regime of their country and are hostile to the mullahs who control everything. But the government has the tools of power firmly in its hands. It controls the instruments of coercion – it can kill people and it controls the oil money. While it would be most desirable and in the interest of the world to be able to foment an overthrow of the Iranian regime, that is an unrealistic and unattainable prospect.

Regrettably, there is only one solution to the terrible dilemma confronting the world, the unacceptable danger of a nuclear-armed Iran. The terror, the destruction and the 60 million dead of World War II could have been prevented at several times during the Nazi regime. But the Allied powers, under the leadership of Britain's prime minister Neville Chamberlain, opted for appeasement and for “peace in our time.” We cannot afford to make that same mistake again. The world must give Iran an ultimatum: Desist immediately from the development of nuclear weapons; if you do not, we shall destroy the facilities that produce them. There still is a window of opportunity to do that. That window may close very soon. But who would do the job? The United States would be the obvious choice. But if the United States were in accord, Israel could do it, just as it did the job in 1981 in destroying Iraq's nuclear potential once and for all.

An attack on the Iranian nuclear installations would fall under the heading of “anticipatory self-defense,” recognized and sanctioned by international law and by common sense. Nobody really knows for sure how far Iran is from reaching its goal – six months, six years? The experts disagree. But if Iran is not stopped now, it may well be too late not very long from now.

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